

BARBARA'S FLOWERS.

My garden must languish, untended,
I sing of another to-day,
Where rare floral beauties are blended,
Tis Barbara's, over the way.
What, over the way? was I dreaming,
Alas, that the way is so wide,
That highways athwart it are gleaming,
So many, our homes to divide.

But spirit than flesh should be stronger,
As mind rises matter above,
And, though she is near me no longer,
I'll call her "my neighbor in love."
My friend is no fanciful maiden,
A true German matron is she,
Whose shoulders with burdens are laden,
Whose thrift is a wonder to see.

No gossiping neighbor derided
When Barbara had produce to sell:
The ways of her household she guided,
And looked to her garden, as well.
So, when the best damask unfolded
Her table on Festival days,
Her firm, yellow butter was molded
To forms that a sculptor would praise.

And fancy her picture is showing
A dress without wrinkle or speck,
A crimson Geranium glowing
Against the soft white at the neck.
How oft were my weep tasks lightened
By thoughts of our Father's kind care,
Beholding the lilies that brightened
Her borders, and braids of her hair.

The words of the sage are far-reaching,
And millions are guided and led:
So Barbara followed the teaching
Of Froebel, the wise, when he said,
Come, let us consider the duty
To live for our children each hour,
To train to symmetrical beauty
And nourish each bud into flower."

No plant in her window was able
By beauty of growth to out-vie
The "olive-plants" circling her table,
That cheery south window close by.
O, children, wherever I'm roaming,
I cannot forget you, I know,
Who tripped past my cot in the gloaming,
Blithe Callie, and Aggie, and Jo.

The lowing of cows, and the clatter,
As homeward you followed along,
With antics and quaint German chatter,
Commingled with snatches of song.
In autumn, perchance, you would linger,
"Till trees of their leaves were all shorn:
The mother had taught each delf finger
To weave them your home to adorn.

Thus sing I the praise of the woman,
Whose tact, like a magical loom,
Could fashion from fibres so common,
Such wonders of beauty and bloom.
In soil that no winter can harden,
With treasures of life's frigid hours,
Still brightly in memory's garden,
Are blossoming Barbara's flowers.

—MRS. L. V. A.

THE LITERATURE OF FRENCH CANADA.

A paper read before the Royal Society of Canada, on the 23rd May, 1883.

BY JOHN LESPERANCE, M.A., F.R.C.S.

I shall perhaps be taxed with exaggeration when I state that the maintenance of the French-Canadian race in the full force of their homogeneity, since the Conquest, is one of the most remarkable phenomena of modern times. Yet such is my deliberate judgment. When we consider the disintegrating influences of altered political institutions; the bewilderment and discouragement brought on by a total change of social conditions; the rankling sense of inferiority that defeat, surrender and military occupation inevitably induce, and the resistless sweep of Anglo-Saxon speech and commercial domination on this continent, the wonder may well be that this people have continued to exist at all. But they have continued to exist. Nay they have flourished. Not only have they increased and multiplied within their original borders, but they have spread from East to West, leaving the literal imprint of their footsteps on the geographical chart of America, from New England to the base of the Rocky Mountains, and all over the Mississippi Valley. Nor did their progress stop there. Not content with physical advancement, they went further and founded a literary microcosm of their own. To me this is a greater marvel than the material fact of their preservation, and I have taken such an interest therein, that I venture to make it the text of a brief memoir before the Royal Society.

It is, indeed, altogether fitting that a representative body like ours should take cognizance of such a subject, being imbued with the principle laid down by Dr. Johnson, that however much soldiers and statesmen may achieve for the renown of their native land, the chief glory of a country lies with its authors.

I.

ORATORS.

I find little trace of intellectual activity from the downfall of Quebec in 1759 till about 1820. The oldest inhabitants had not recovered from the blow to their destinies, and the rising generations were only gradually reconciling themselves to the new order of things. But toward the latter period there was a general awakening to a policy of self-assertion, grounded on the idea of French-Canadian autonomy, as a result of a strict interpretation of the treaty of Paris. This sentiment was manifested in the establishment of one or two militant papers, and in strong appeals from the Legislative Assembly.

Several valiant tribunes of pen and speech then arose in the persons of the two Papineaus, Taschereau, Blanchet, Bedard, Panet, Vallières de St. Real, Bourdage, Denis Benjamin Viger, Bibaud and Parent. I group these together for the sake of classification, although their services extended promiscuously over a term of five and twenty years. They have the further advantage of giving me a starting-point and enabling me to trace the origin of French-Canadian literature to its orators. Papineau stands *facile princeps* among these. His contemporaries describe him as a Mirabeau, both in variety of learning and the higher gifts of voice, gesture and inspiration. His speeches have unfortunately not been preserved, but from the scraps that have reached us, we may easily account for the admiration of those who enjoyed the advantage of hearing him, either in the halls of Parliament or in the immense uprisings that led to the rebellion of 1837-38. Since those days, Papineau has had a long train of brilliant disciples. Chief among them is the Hon. P. J. A. Chauveau, Vice-President of our Society. M. Chauveau is essentially an academic orator, accurately rhetorical, delicate in feeling, judiciously impassioned and a thorough stylist. His panegyric of the Braves who fell at the battle of Ste. Foye, in 1760, is a masterpiece, worthy of the place it has long held in the various collections of elegant extracts. I have only space to mention next the Lafontaines, Morins, Papins, Laberges, Dorions, Lorangers, and Labreches. These all flourished in the eventful days from 1848 to 1867. In our own time, the traditions of oratory have not been lost. The Province of Quebec can boast to-day of two born orators such as are not surpassed in any part of the Dominion, nor in any period of the country's history. I refer to Chapleau and Laurier. I have heard some of the most illustrious masters of speech in the United States and Europe and can safely say that, in natural gifts, none of them appear to me to excel either of the two orators I have just mentioned. In a larger sphere, and before audiences that would afford an ampler measure of publicity, both of them would achieve a continental reputation. Mercier is not far behind, and he is followed by a long line of young speakers, such as Charland, Christin, Tremblay, Poirier, Corneliier, Thibault and others who are training for eminent positions in the parliamentary career.

The circumstances of the Roman Catholic system in French Canada are particularly favorable to the development of pulpit oratory, and it is easy to enumerate such distinguished preachers as the Racines, Colins, Martineaus, Levesques, Gibands, Hamons, Paquet, Bruchesi, Belanger, Legare, Beaudoin.

I know of no better school for the youthful student of oratory than the sacred tribune, where, as at the feet of Gamaliel, he may learn from men of deep scholarship the art of combining the graces of elocution with appropriate erudition and logical sequence of thought. This union is the more to be sought after, as, notwithstanding my admiration for our French orators, I am bound to confess that they too frequently rely on natural advantages, to the neglect of serious argument and learned illustration.

II.

HISTORIANS AND BIOGRAPHERS.

There is no department of literature that presupposes more intellectual vigor in a young country than that of history and biography. Happy is the people that has a history of its own to be written and a historian of its own to write it. French Canada has both. Considering the circumstances under which it was written, and the resources at his command, Garneau's history is a remarkable performance, constituting an epoch. It is a monument both to the man and to the land, and Garneau's son has fulfilled at once a filial and patriotic duty in issuing a new edition, with an introduction from the pen of M. Chauveau. With broader means of information, and working on a different plane, Ferland followed in the wake of Garneau, producing a work of invaluable importance, unfortunately left incomplete by the author's premature death. The two works supplement each other nicely, and the details which they have left untold or undeveloped are supplied by the monumental work of Faillon, "Histoire de la Colonie Française dans la Nouvelle France," of which, however, only three quartos have appeared, and the still later volumes of Sulte, "Histoire des Canadiens Français," now in process of periodical publication. Among minor works or monographs restricted to certain periods, I may mention with praise "Bedard's" "Histoire de Cinquante Ans," Turcotte's history of "Le Canada sous l'Union," an epoch stretching from the union of the two old Provinces in 1841 to the broad era of Confederation in 1867, and the history of the rebellion in 1837-8 by L. O. David. M. David has also produced quite a number of biographies of eminent men, ecclesiastical and lay, written in a fluent, agreeable style, and a rare spirit of impartiality. The chief of French-Canadian biographers is, however, the Abbe Casgrain, whose life of the Venerable Mother of the Incarnation is sufficient to establish any writer's fame. But the Abbe has by no means contented himself with that work, and I may as well state here that this prolific and elegant writer has published with success a number of volumes of light literature, descriptive of the legends and traditions of the old Quebec district. He deservedly ranks as one of the best pens in the Province. Another important contribution

to biography is "Les Canadiens de L'Ouest," by Joseph Tasse, which won for its author a place in the Royal Society. This work has special interest from the fact that it chronicles the adventures of many of those remarkable Canadians who first explored the Great West, from Detroit to Vancouver, and abounds with incidents that cannot be found elsewhere. The Abbe Desmazures has contributed a number of interesting biographical and historical sketches notably, on Colbert and Talon. Another work of inestimable value is the "La Généalogie des Familles Canadiennes," by l'Abbe Tanguay which is a perfect storehouse of useful reference. Of other detached biographies the number runs into the scores, and of course I am precluded from naming them.

III.

POETS.

And now the poets. Here French Canada can afford to smile in the assurance that she will never sink into oblivion, *carit quia vate sacro*. This department is well stored, and with works of superior excellence. The limits of my paper, barely allowing of enumeration, will not admit of analysis, and much less of criticism, and hence I will not stop to justify the opinion that no country of its size or duration of intellectual life can point to a higher record in the realms of verse. The Canadian French are fond of music and song, are gay of temperament, particularly susceptible of the tender passion, greedy of adventure, and keenly imaginative. All these qualities point to a thirst for the poetical element, and the want has been abundantly supplied. The roll is a lengthy one of those who have voiced the aspirations of their countrymen, sung of their joys and sorrows, celebrated their glories, described the simple life of their village homes, and interpreted the meaning of their destinies. They are the two Garneaus, father and son, Lenoir, Fiset, Chauveau, Donnelly, Prudhomme, Marchand, Poisson, Routhier, Chapman and Lajoie. The latter has immortalized himself by a single ballad, "Un Canadien Errant," just as Sir George Cartier would be remembered by his "O Canada, Mon Pays, Mes Amours," even if he had not been one of the Fathers of Confederation. Blain de St. Aubin has also written charming songs, set to music by himself. Among the poets of a higher flight, or who have produced more ambitious works, I give the first place, after much reflection, to Cremazie. He was a man of creative genius who would have made his mark in any country, and had circumstances allowed him to cultivate his great talents in quietude of mind, he would have written poems of sublime worth. As it is, barring a few weak lines, here and there, which he never had the heart to revise, his "Vieux Soldat," "Drapeau de Carillon," and "Les Morts," are perfect and stir the soul like the blare of clarions. Cremazie deserves a monument at the hands of his countrymen, and that monument ought to be a national edition of his works. Following closely is Frechette, a poet in the loftiest sense of the term, and still in the maturity of his powers. He has done his full share toward spreading the knowledge of his country abroad, by winning from the French Academy the Monthyon Award, an honor somewhat equivalent to that of the Oxford University Prize Poem. Cremazie is the Hugo, Frechette the Lamartine of Canada. The Beranger is Sulte. This poet is, perhaps, more distinctively national than any of the others, because he confines himself to the songs of the people. His "Patineuse" is a little gem. Lemay has written a number of long poems, but in my opinion, the best of them is his translation of "Evangeline." You will doubtless smile when I venture the statement that some of the lines are an improvement on the original, but I am happy to add that Longfellow himself concurred in this view. At least one clergyman has not deemed it derogatory to cultivate the muse in the intervals of his parochial ministrations, and it is some satisfaction to be able to say that he is almost as good a poet as he is a faithful pastor. "Au Foyer de mon Presbytere," by the Abbe Gingras, is a dainty little volume, by no means faultless indeed, chiefly through lack of revision, but containing many tender and striking passages, with a novelty of treatment such as might be expected from the heart of a celibate priest.

It is perhaps owing to the general disapproval of the clergy that, notwithstanding their taste for the theatre and the natural histrionic gifts of the people, the French writers of Canada have not cultivated dramatic composition. The only plays of any note that I can find are a tragedy written by Gerin-Lajoie in his youth for Nicolet College, the "Papineau," and "L'Exile," of Frechette, and two or three comedies of a very superior order by Marchand.

IV.

NOVELISTS.

After the poets naturally come the novelists. Here again the field is wide and it has been well cultivated. As was to be expected, the historical romance predominates, that being one of the most efficient means of popular instruction and entertainment in a sphere that is so particularly rich as are the annals of New France. Every variety of picturesque material is at hand. There is the era of discovery and settlement—Cartier, Champlain, Maisonneuve; that of heroic resistance to the Iroquois through a hundred years of warfare—Dollard and Vercheres; that of

daring adventure in the pathless wilds—Joliet and Lasalle; that of apostleship and martyrdom—Brebouf, Lallemant and Jogues; that of diplomacy and administration—Talon, the great disciple of Colbert; that of military glory—Tracy and the lion-hearted Frontenac; that of debauchery and corruption—Bigot and Penan; that of downfall and gloom—Montcalm and Levis. Canadians ought to be proud of such a history, and it is no wonder that their romancers should take pleasure in describing its varied scenes. The venerable De Gaspe may be said to have led the van in this department with "Les Anciens Canadiens," a work of absorbing interest, in spite of its occasional diffuseness. He was followed by Marmette, who has published three or four historical novels of more than ordinary merit, "L'Intendant Bigot" being particularly worthy of mention. "Une de Perdue, Deux de Trouvées" by DeBoucherville deals, in its second part, with the events of 1837, and gives a graphic picture of the battle of St. Denis. The destruction of L'Acadie, "home of the happy," and the banishment of its faithful inhabitants form the subject of Bourassa's "Jacques et Marie," a work which I have always regarded as altogether superior in its class, notwithstanding frequent traces of hurried composition. It contains pages of admirable coloring, and such richness of style as to induce regret that this gifted man should have had his mind diverted to other branches of art.

In other and lighter forms of romance I have two or three names to signalize. Chauveau's "Charles Guerin" is a sweet picture of *habitant* life, which has retained its charm of freshness, although dating back some thirty years. Another masterpiece that is destined to live is the "Jean Rivard" of the late Gerin-Lajoie, a description of pioneer life in the Eastern Townships or Bois Francs, of renewed interest in our time when the tide of French colonization is rolling to the fertile plains between the Ottawa and the foot of the Laurentian Mountains. I may mention, too, a series of short domestic stories by Charles Leclerc, a young writer full of promise, who was cut off in his prime.

V.

ESSAYISTS AND CHRONIQUEURS.

A favorite species of composition, drawn from the practice of old France, is the *Chronique*. This is a slight form of the essay in which topics of current interest are touched off in an airy, jaunty style. Many of our writers have distinguished themselves therein; this being especially true of Casgrain, Routhier, Legendre and Montpetit. Routhier has produced much of late in other departments, and, if he continues, will establish a most enviable reputation. Both Montpetit and Legendre wield a graceful pen that writes the French language to perfection. But the prince of *chroniqueurs* is Fabre, a true Parisian in temperament, possessed of that subtle *esprit*, which is supposed to impregnate the atmosphere of the boulevards. Here is a man who has not done justice to himself, inasmuch as he does not produce half enough. Baies, belonging to the same school, is another writer of exceptionally brilliant talent, now caustic in satire, then rollicking in humor, and at times tenderly pathetic. In a somewhat different vein, because rather inclined to melancholy, is Faucher de St. Manrice, unquestionably one of the chief glories of French-Canadian literature. Faucher is a careful, conscientious writer, and every work of his is worth attentive perusal. His sketches of travel—and he has travelled much—are full of entertainment, while his volume of sketches entitled "A La Bruyante" has some ravishing bits. M. Faucher enjoys the distinction of having been elected an honorary member of *La Société des gens de lettres de France*. Among essayists of a more serious cast, the lead is taken by Oscar Dunn, whose "Dix Années de Journalisme" contain a number of important studies on moral and philosophical subjects, written in a fine judicial spirit and the purest French. This purism is further manifested in the "Glossaire Franco-Canadien," a little book in which the author catalogues and accounts for terms that are exclusively French-Canadian. The world of Canadian literature lately suffered a great loss by the death of Larue, one of the most dashing and captivating writers of Quebec, and it is to be regretted that Dr. Tache has not continued to put forth such legends, sketches and studies as rendered his earlier career so brilliant. A number of the best essayists may be found among the clergy, such as Messrs. Desautels, Raymond, Desmazures and Lacasse. I shall not trespass on your time by enumerating the large class of miscellaneous writers, but content myself with naming the well-written dissertations of Simeon Lesage on agricultural matters, the useful volume of Paul de Cazes on the resources of the Province and Dominion, the admirable work of Ernest Gagnon, on the "Chants Populaires du Canada," the memoirs of Meilleur and Chauveau on the progress of education in French Canada, the descriptive studies of LeMoine, eclipsed, as they are, however, by his numerous works in English, and the writings of the Abbe Provancher, in subjects of natural history.

VI.

JOURNALISTS.

It is well known that in France journalism is a training school of literature, through which most of the chief writers have passed at some epoch of their career. It is the same in Canada.