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Calixa has other interests as well. He takes in all the epic tales that old men tell him around a fire. Madeleine de Verchères is still well remembered in the little neighbourhood which was saved by her heroism. The struggles for liberty are fresh in every memory. Many volunteers who sided with the Patriots of Saint-Denis are still alive. Lafontaine is winning his first parliamentary victories. Oligarchy is playing its last trumps; in Montreal, it caused the burning of the Parliament Building, of the library and of the house of Lafontaine as well; it also occasioned the shameful stoning of Lord Elgin's carriage because he was too sympathetic towards French Canadians. Proud citizens who refuse to bow their heads dwell upon facts and memories, discuss them over and over again, exchange comments. Young Calixa listens, and is fired with exultation. One day, Papineau returning from exile and acclaimed everywhere as liberator is pointed out to him. What more does a passionate soul need to vibrate in unison with the pulse of the nation? Slowly but surely in the depths of his being, the solemn chords of the national anthem are taking shape.

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So far, no formal musical education has been given our future celebrity. Around 1848, the family moved to St. Hyacinthe, and the young man's earnest aspirations could thus be realized. His father enters the workshop of Joseph Casavant as an organ-builder. A few years later, under the direction of Joseph Casavant's 2 sons, Claver and Samuel, this same firm was to