

USE OF FRENCH IN THE COMMERCIAL WORLD.

In regard to commerce, I need only remind you that French is the language of the continental world; and so much and so justly is the knowledge of French regarded by some mercantile men, that any one absolutely unacquainted with the language would find it difficult to obtain an introduction into their counting-houses. The same language is indispensable if you aspire to a clerkship in a Government office. To the skilled mechanic, also, I should think the language most valuable, affording, as it does, a key not only to a vast storehouse of mechanical and mathematical knowledge, but also to all those mechanical inventions that French ingenuity is daily bringing forth.

FRENCH LITERATURE.

I have scarcely time to do more than allude to what I would be disposed to regard as the strongest stimulus to the student of French—I mean the exceeding value of the literature to which the knowledge of French is the key. It is true that many of those works have been translated into your own language, but allow me to tell you that almost every translation, however good it may be, may be compared to a carpet turned wrong side upwards, if not worse. Before coming into England, I read a good translation of Walter Scott's novels, with which I was much pleased; but reading them a second time in English gave me far more pleasure. And yet the works of Walter Scott are not difficult to translate. In every department of literature, science, and philosophy, the student of French will here find authors who will bear honourable comparison with those of any age or country. I need only refer to the names of Molière, Corneille, Racine, Fénelon, Massillon, Bossuet, Pascal, La Place, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Cousin, Arago, Lamartine, Châteaubriand, Victor Hugo, &c., and a host of others as celebrated, whom even to name would be tedious. The lecturer then read various extracts from some of the more distinguished French writers, both in prose and verse, translating each piece as he proceeded, to the great gratification of the audience. In conclusion, having offered a few words of advice to those about to begin the study of the French language he said—My last words are an earnest appeal to those young students among my auditory. An opportunity is now offered to you to propagate the good of this noble institution, and to disseminate afar its many advantages. Let us unite our energies for the prosperity of the School of Arts. Let us anticipate the day when with grateful recollection you may acknowledge the blessings of the education given and received within these walls.

On the motion of the CHAIRMAN, a hearty vote of thanks was awarded to Monsieur Schneider for his excellent lecture.

French Canadian Poets.

Lecture by the REV. ÆNEAS McDONELL DAWSON on the Poets of Canada.

(Concluded from our last.)

This audience will not I am sure, be displeased to hear something about those amongst our Poets who have written in French and who are for the most part, of French Canadian origin. It is, indeed, time that after hearing so much about English Poets, you should be invited to listen to some discourse about those sons of Genius and the Muses who have done honor to your own people and tongue,—have done so much by their highly finished compositions, to preserve the sweet and musical language of old France. You will allow me to dispense with any fixed order, (a privilege which I claimed in regard to the English Poets) in enumerating the authors of French Poems who have won for themselves a name in these Provinces. The gift of Genius, it is scarcely necessary to observe, is conferred without reference to nationality. But as regards Literature and Literary pursuits, the French Canadian people have greater difficulties to contend with than their fellow-countrymen of British origin. The chief of these, perhaps, is the circumstance that the ranks of their literary men are not recruited from the Parent Land, whilst British men of letters who have won honors at the Schools and Universities of the United Kingdom, or have attained there to more or less literary distinction, are constantly taking up their abode in Canada. It is, besides, deserving of remark, that the French language, however beautiful when wielded by an accomplished Poet, presents difficulties to the aspiring Bard that are unknown to the composer of English verse. Both languages, indeed, must be handled by a master-hand when there is question of rising to Poetic excellence. But of the two, considered as weapons at the disposal of the Poet, the French is undoubtedly the more

difficult. Honor then to the Poets of Canadian origin who have cultivated and enriched the language of their race! In recounting them, we wonder not that they are comparatively so few, but rather that their numbers are so much greater than could well be hoped for.

As I have not decided on any order whether alphabetical or according to merit or seniority, you will not conclude that I consider Mr. BENJAMIN SULTE as positively the most meritorious of our French Canadian Poets, nor yet that I set him down as in any respect, inferior, and so commence at the foot of the ladder. His name and age suggest that I should present him to you, and I do so with no ordinary pleasure, as the BENJAMIN of the Poet family.

Born at Three Rivers in 1841, he was early distinguished by his taste for letters. Whilst still a resident of his native city, he laboured assiduously to promote the elevation of Literature amongst his fellow-countrymen. With a view to this noble end, he founded a club known as '*The Three Rivers Literary Institute*.' He became, its first president, and it flourished under his fostering care. I am not aware that his poems have appeared as yet, in a collected form, but, many elegant compositions from his pen have figured most favorably in the periodicals of the time;—such as the *Revue Canadienne*, the *Écho du Cabinet de Lecture Paroissiale*, and the *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*. The critics, among the rest, HECTOR FABRE, highly eulogize his style, describing it as at once simple and graceful, vigorous and perspicuous. All agree in foretelling that he will occupy one day, the highest rank among the gifted sons of Genius. The Literary men of Ottawa ratified this verdict and marked their appreciation of the success which he has already achieved as a Poet, by inviting him to a public banquet at which the Mayor of the City filled the chair, on occasion of his departure for Montreal where he was asked to accept the office of Secretary to an important manufacturing company. This need not, and we may rely upon it, will not, sever him from the society of the Muses.

I shall not pretend to say which of all Mr. Sulte's numerous compositions is the best,—his master-piece. I would rather refer to a few pieces selected at random. In his "*Canada Français à l'Angleterre*,"—a Poem in which—it were hard to say whether patriotic indignation combined with the most generous sentiments, or elegant poetic expression, abound the more.

As I must quote something, according to my programme, and still more, according to my inclination when there is question of Mr. Sulte's compositions, I shall ask you to listen for a moment, whilst I read to you that amusing popular ballad:

LA BELLE MEUNIÈRE.

—Par les chemins, qui donc, ma belle,
Vous attire si bon matin ?—
Et rougissant la jouvencelle
Dit : "Seigneur, je vais au moulin."

—Le cristal bleu de la rivière
A bien moins de limpidité
Que ton joyeux regard, ma chère.
—"Monseigneur est plein de bonté."

—Quel frais minois ! quel port de reine !
Approche, enfant : vrai ! tu me plais !
A tant de grâce souveraine
Il faut pour logis un palais.

Monte en croupe et sois ma maîtresse,
Viens ! je suis chevalier-baron . . .
... Mais pourquoi cet air de tristesse
Et cet incarnat sur ton front ?

Ne fuyez pas, mademoiselle,
Vous aurez mon titre et mon cœur ;
Je vous conduis à la chapelle.
—"Merci, c'est beaucoup trop d'honneur."

—Qui donc êtes-vous, ma charmante,
Pour refuser un chevalier ?
Quelque dame riche et puissante ?
—"Je suis la fille du meunier."

—Quoi, du meunier !—Dieu me pardonne !
J'en suis marri pour ton bonheur :
Je ne puis t'épouser, ma bonne.
—"Qui vous a demandé, Seigneur ?"

At the risk of changing your mirth to sadness, I shall now read a short Poem of a quite different character,—one that is more in keep-