

## CANADIAN WRITERS.

It has been whispered that an historical novel, Canadian in scope and treatment, and referring to the early part of the eighteenth century, is being written and is nearly completed. I do not think I am violating any confidence in stating that the author is Mr. H. Beaugrand. He wields a facile pen, but whether he can do justice to his subject remains to be seen. Certain it is that no one wishes him more success in this work than I do. The field is an almost untrodden one, and the wealth of matter and incident to be treated of is apt to seduce a writer into superficiality and even mis-statement.

The histories of Canada hitherto published are, speaking of them as a whole, unsatisfactory and perfunctory; all are marred, even to the very latest, by prejudice and provincialism, and many contain glaring historical errors. These latter are due, in a great measure, to lack of investigation, for which, it must be confessed, our paternal and patriotic governments, both Provincial and Federal, are very seriously to blame. But little has been done relatively in the way of securing copies of manuscripts, now in the archives at Paris; of State papers in London, and of a large amount of uninvestigated matter, which certainly exists in Spanish and Portuguese collections. The historical societies of New York and Massachusetts have done much more in this regard than have the Canadian governments, and Canadian students must rely on transcripts of these documents, some of them still unpublished, for the verification of certain historical facts. I am well aware of the good work, in fact, most excellent work, being done by Mr. Douglas Brymner, as public archivist, and only regret that his earnest efforts are not encouraged still more by large grants from the public purse. If fifty thousand dollars were given annually, for four or five years, an extremely valuable collection might be made.

And, hidden away in private collections, throughout the Province of Quebec, is much valuable material which should be accessible in some shape or other to the student. The difficulties of consulting these precious documents are only known to those who have made the attempt. I have had personal experience of this, and I regret to say that the jealousy of some collectors is such that consultation of matter in their possession is refused, or so beset with conditions as to render it practically impossible. In this connection, however, I have much pleasure in stating that to Messrs. D. R. McCord, of Montreal, and J. M. LeMoine, of Quebec, I am greatly indebted for favours extended from their valuable collections. There are others, I am sure, who are as obliging, but many seem to think their collections are "caviare to the general," and entirely forbidden to the few who need them.

Of late it would appear that a taste and demand for Canadian historical matter have been on the increase, and it is sincerely to be hoped this is true. The recently formed Society for Historical Studies in Montreal has been the means of bringing forth some admirable papers, which, it is sincerely to be desired, will be issued in a permanent form, and, of course, properly edited before publication. The trouble with many of our amateur historians or historical specialists is that their matter is altogether too redundant, and they frequently make statements not warranted by the historical evidence. It is ever to be remembered that there is much yet to be known about our earlier history, and much of the ecclesiastical matter has to be very carefully judged and examined. New facts are yearly coming to light, so that a writer has to be extremely careful in his conclusions. I might give many instances to confirm this.

It will, doubtless, be suggested to many—what profit is there in these writings to the writer? And the answer is not an encouraging one—nor is literature, historical or otherwise, a profitable profession in any country, except to the greater lights. And Canada is no different in this particular. A Canadian writer of merit can succeed here, and even writing only of Canadian subjects. But

those, or, at least, many of those, who assume to be Canadian writers, are mere scribblers, having never had any practical training. And yet they are the first to find fault with the Canadian public for lack of appreciation. It would hardly do for me to specify more particularly. Efforts have been made, from time to time, to establish a monthly magazine, a literary weekly, and all have been very conspicuous failures. Why? Well, I must candidly confess that my honest opinion is that they did not deserve public support. The *New Dominion Monthly*\* was a wretched affair, both in matter, literary style, choice of articles, printed very badly and on poor paper. It met a deserved death. The monthly started in Toronto, which also came to an early grave, was much better; still it was wishy-washy, and aimed at servile imitation of the leading English and American reviews. Like many imitations, it was a complete failure. And that weekly, the *Canadian Spectator*, which started out with such a noise and such a beating of trumpets, dragged out a miserable existence. It was soon seen that it was only a donkey in a lion's skin.

Writers forget the important element in the establishing of a weekly or monthly—namely, the business management and financing. And writers must remember that, though their articles may be very clever, they may not be worth ten cents to the publication to which it is sent. Of Newton's *Principia* probably not more than fifty copies a year are sold, yet no one will deny their exceeding value. And I must say that Canadian writers—the majority of them—are sadly in need of experience and training—that is, practical training in journalism. Some may possess it through intuition, but they are very few.

Montreal.

HIRAM B. STEPHENS.

[\* The writer was quite a youth, I fancy, when the *New Dominion Monthly* was going on, and hence his unsatisfactory impression. It must be remembered that this was one of the pioneers of periodical journalism, quite equal to the opportunities of the times, and numbered among its contributors some of the best writers of the period. Bound sets of the *Dominion Monthly* would probably furnish very pleasant and useful reading to-day. Mr. Stephens speaks out his mind, like a man, on historical and other writers of Canada, and he, and others who have the right of speech on such subjects, are welcome to these columns.—Editor DOMINION ILLUSTRATED.]

## A CHILD'S PITY.

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,  
Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears;  
Yet, sometimes sweeter than their words or smiles,  
Are even their tears.

To one, for once, a piteous tale was read,  
How, when the murderous mother crocodile  
Was slain, her fierce brood famished and lay dead,  
Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast grey slime,  
Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,  
Perishing only for the parents' crime,  
Whose seed were they.

Hours after, toward the dusk, our small blithe bird  
Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,  
Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,  
For pity weeping.

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,  
For the poor little crocodiles, he said,  
Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,  
A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous ends,  
We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles;  
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's  
Out-hine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city  
Could match the heavenly heart in children here?  
The heart that, hallowing all things with its pity,  
Casts out all fear?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter  
Seems to us, we know not what could be more clear.  
But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter  
Of such a tear.

With sense of love, half laughing and half weeping,  
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited friend,  
Let your life have us in your heavenly keeping  
To life's last end.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.



The Bishop of Carlisle in a sermon referred to "a text floating in a vast quantity of weak soup." The subject of his discourse must have been the oyster.

Professor of English—"I wish you could have been present at our college commencement."

Speaker of English—"I was, sir. I helped lay the corner stone."

"Fellow citizens," exclaimed a Smithville orator, "when the war cry rang over this broad land—" "You was in the barn loft, under six foot of fodder!" shouted a man in the crowd who knew him.

Woman (kindly)—"You say you are very hungry, my poor man; that you have had but little to eat for several days?"

Tramp (very earnestly)—"Madame, there is a wooden toothpick that has lasted me nearly three weeks."

She (of Boston)—"I have seen it stated that Browning has refused \$1,000 for a short poem."

He—"Is it possible! Why, what do you suppose he means?"

"Impossible to say. Nobody knows what Browning means."

"Can I get a position as canvasser for that new book you intend to issue?"

Publisher—"Do you know anything about the book?"

"Yes, I'm the author; and I thought if I could get a position as canvasser I might be able to make a little money out of it."

A Biddeford man while washing the outside of his own windows with the hose thought he would do a neighbourly kindness for the lady who lived in the tenement overhead. He meant well, but as the deceptive scenic screens failed to show him that the windows were wide open, the effect was not just what he expected.—*Lewiston Journal*.

Mrs. Bradleigh—"What name did the Abbots decide on for their new yacht?"

Mr. Bradleigh—"They call her the Come-in-To-morrow, I believe."

Mrs. Bradleigh—"What an awfully slow name!"

Mr. Bradleigh—"Yes, but it harmonizes beautifully with the way she is being paid for."

Friend—"I called to see, Courtly, if you could let me have the \$20 you borrowed a couple of months ago of me."

Courtly—"Can't do it possibly this morning, dear boy."

Friend—"Well, I was passing, and I thought I would stop, thinking I would catch you in."

Courtly—"Yes; five minutes later and I would have been out. You are in luck; yes, you are positively lucky."

Gerald Griffin, in a letter, mentions that one morning at breakfast he asked the waiter, at the Inn of Bromham, did he know anything about Mr. Thomas Moore, of Sloperton Cottage.

"Yes," replied the waiter, "he is a poet."

"I did not know," writes Griffin, "whether to embrace the man for knowing so much, or to kick him for knowing so little."

"Mr. Scrapem," said the hostess to an amateur violinist at an evening gathering, "you play the violin, do you not?"

"Yes—after a fashion, you know," was the modest reply.

"How nice!" murmured half the company.

"Did you bring your violin with you?"

"No, I did not."

"How nice!" murmured the half of the company in fervent unison.—*Merchant Traveller*.

A TOUGH BOY.—"Your wickedness will bring down your father's gray hair in sorrow to the grave," said an Austin school teacher to the worst boy in the school.

"Oh, no, I guess not."

"Are you going to reform, then, and lead a new life?"

"Not much; but I'm not going to bring the old man's gray hair in sorrow to the grave, for the old duffer wears a wig and belongs to a cremation society."

A.—"Have you read Mr. Gladstone's remarks upon Col. Ingersoll's rejoinder to Dr. Field's answer to Ingersoll's reply to Dr. Field's Open Letter to Mr. Ingersoll's retort to Gladstone?"

B.—"No, I have not; but I am waiting with no little interest Mr. Gladstone's reply to Col. Ingersoll's retort to Dr. Field's Open Letter to Mr. Ingersoll's rejoinder to Dr. Field's answer to Col. Ingersoll's reply to Mr. Gladstone's remarks."

As he arranged her rugs and adjusted her steamer chair she said, dreamily:

"Mr. Byron, don't you think the Etruria is just the sweetest ship afloat?"

"No, indeed, Miss Classic, I don't do anything of the kind," he murmured.

"What ship do you prefer, then—the Umbria?" she enquired, with some surprise.

"Well, I think courtship is about the sweetest of the fleet, don't you?" he asked, innocently.

But she pretended to be asleep.