

obtaining a foothold on Canadian soil. The severity of the climate, the extent and density of the forests to be cleared, the roads to be made, the towns to be built and protected, the large families to be brought up, the incessant and murderous wars to be waged against the Indians, the United States and England, all these and other causes exhausted the vital energies and the resources of the French Canadians during more than two hundred years, that is to say, to the year 1840. They lacked both the time and the means to cultivate letters, and could barely acquire the knowledge requisite for their various avocations. Accordingly, it was only from the date just mentioned that we note the budding of the literary talents which excite our admiration. Since then this budding promise has burst into flower with such profusion and wealth as to justify the highest anticipations for the future. Tales, novels, travels, poetry, history and science are flourishing among us, and are receiving conscientious attention. So numerous are these productions that it would require a volume to examine the writers deserving to be studied. As I do not wish to occupy too much space I shall only indicate some of those who tower above the rest in fiction, history and poetry.

FICTION.—Even so long ago as the days of *Gil Blas*, Le Sage, discussing the influence which the novel should exert, wrote in his preface: "Reader, if you read my adventures without paying heed to the moral lessons which they contain, you will derive no benefit from this work." One hundred and sixty years later M. de Vogüé writes in an excellent introduction to his *Roman russe*: "I attribute a moral purpose to the art of writing; and here is the statement best suited to convey my opinion. It seems to me that it should serve as a writer's motto: 'The Lord fashioned man out of clay, and breathed into him a breath of life, and man became a living soul.' Clay and breath, matter and life, these are the double theme of the novel-writer." Every writer who has an honest respect for man and is earnestly desirous for his welfare holds the same view. And, therefore, in spite of what is said by novelists of the realistic school, who set a moral purpose apart from their work by maintaining theories of art for the sake of art, the novel is really something above and beyond mere fictitious narrative in prose, whereby the author strives to arouse some interest, whether in developing passion, or by depicting manners and customs, or, again, by relating striking accounts of purely imaginary events. The novel really