

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

(From an Occasional Correspondent.)

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, August 30.

Our agriculturists are giving great attention to the breeding of pure short horn cattle. They are compelled to do so, as your countryman, Mr. Cochrane, of Billhunt, is a strong competitor. Indeed Canada is becoming so strong at our great sales, that the energy of our breeders is being redoubled. The first in the vanguard is Capt. Gunter, of Weatherby, Yorkshire, who supplied Mr. Cochrane with his "Duchess" 97 for a thousand guineas. The Captain is the breeder of what is generally called "Bate's Blood," which commands higher prices than any other blood. A life of Mr. Bates is in preparation, and I shall supply you with a sketch in another letter, and also a portrait of that wonderful man, which cannot but be of interest to Canada.

The strike for the nine hours still continues in this district, but foreign workmen are being successfully introduced. Serious cases of intimidation and cruelty are practised by the strike hands.

Although the harvest is late in this country, the fine weather we are now enjoying will make it a good year after all. Corn is ripening fast, and cheap bread, fortunately, will be had for the masses.

The Ballot Bill having been thrown out by the Lords, no demonstrations of any importance are being carried on. The people seem lukewarm. The conduct of the Government in the unusual course adopted of abolishing purchase in the army is far from popular, even with the masses.

The intended visit of the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne to Canada will not, I understand, take place this year. Next spring, I am informed, if all goes well, will see them in Canada, where, I am sure, they will get a hearty reception.

Several M.P.'s. are contemplating visiting Canada this year, for the purpose of observing the resources of the country for themselves. It is highly desirable our senators should visit the colonies, so as to make them able to talk of the affairs affecting the colonies and inhabitants. Bad legislation often results from want of knowledge. What will do for England will not do for a colony. Hitherto our colonies have been neglected, but a better day is coming, and for our future stability and prestige, the colonies are to be depended on. Hence the anxiety of our senators in making themselves familiar with them by personal observation. In my last letter I mentioned about the establishment of a society for the purpose of urging on emigrants to Canada in preference to the United States. I have been in communication with several distinguished men. Some agree and some differ as to the advisability of such a society. The most important letter is that from Earl Grey, who, as Lord Howick, was under-secretary for the colonies, which brought him frequently before the House of Commons on topics relative to that department, and vindicated Canadian interests (this was in 1830) in a speech of great length, expressing his conviction of the importance of conducting emigration on comprehensive principles, embracing at once the interests of the colonists and the mother country. Earl Grey in his letter to me says:

"I am not surprised to learn the result of your observations on British emigrants in Canada and the United States, and I agree with you in considering it desirable that as large a proportion of the emigrants from this country should be directed to the former instead of the latter, but I confess that I have little belief in the possibility of promoting that by means of any such society as you suggest. Most emigrants will choose their destination from private motives, or from private information.

"A great many follow friends or relatives who have gone before them, the choice of others is determined by information they think they can depend upon obtained from other quarters, and very few indeed would listen to suggestions made to them in the manner you propose. Indeed I should have some fear that the formation of such a society with the avowed object of endeavouring to turn the current of emigration towards the British colonies, instead of to the United States, might excite suspicion, and perhaps if the operations of the society had any effect at all it might turn out to be the very opposite of what was intended.

"I am &c.,
"GREY."

While to a great extent his lordship is right, yet I think by an effort of disinterested persons (I mean not agents receiving pecuniary reward) visiting the agricultural districts in the fall, several agriculturists might be induced to come to Canada. In my next letter I hope to send you some gratifying results of such efforts. Perhaps some thing might be done with a tax. No man can leave the United States without paying a stamp tax on his passage ticket, and I think the same might be done in England. Earl Grey expects to visit Canada this year.

The sad news of Renforth's death cast quite a gloom over the entire district. Many shed tears on the telegraph announcement.

There is some talk of a large number of journalists and editors having a tour in the spring of next year to Canada and the States as far as Chicago. If this be done, the country will be brought before the public very prominently.

The great work of piercing the Alps, now so happily accomplished, has for some time past engaged the attention of scientific men. In 1832 several designs on the subject were presented to the authorities, the most noticeable of which was that of Médail; in 1843 the engineer Mauss produced a machine of his own invention, and an English engineer named Bartlett also furnished a plan. Dr. Colladon, of Geneva, afterwards brought forward his experiments, which greatly facilitated the achievement of the work. The various suggestions were taken into consideration by the committee appointed by Count Cavour in 1857. It was composed of the engineers Sommeiller, Grandis, and Grattoni, who were joined by other engineers during the deliberations. The chief honour of the work is due to Sommeiller, who devised the stupendous perforating machine, by means of which he brought to a rapid termination the work that has gained the admiration of Europe. So accurate an idea was formed of the length of the tunnel, that when the two parties of workmen met in the centre, it was discovered that 12,236 metres formed the total length of the boring instead of 12,220, which were calculated in the estimate of the scheme.

R. E.

THE PROGRESS OF CANADIAN LITERATURE.

Different men have different ways of testing the progress of a country. My test is the progress of its literature. The deduction is easily made. Where there is an active commerce, there is a free circulation of money; where money is plentiful, a surplus is devoted to education. Education creates a demand for books and the different forms of reading matter, and to meet this demand publishers eagerly come forward, backed by a host of writers in the diverse walks of letters. In a financial crisis the book-trade is the first to suffer. In an era of financial prosperity literature always flourishes.

Tried by this standard, there can be no question that Canada is rapidly progressing. Twenty years ago, as I am informed, elementary schools were scanty; colleges and academies were few, and making only faint beginnings; special courses were unknown, and the people had little to read beyond newspapers and political pamphlets. Now, all this is changed. The common school system is established everywhere with results that obtained even European commendation; there are colleges and universities mounted on a fair footing; a spirit of inquiry pervades all classes, and the consequence is that Canada is fast laying the foundations of a literature of her own. This is a matter for congratulation. Science, letters and the arts are the triple crown of a people. Dr. Johnson has said that "the chief glory of a nation lies in its authors."

I.

In reviewing the links of this literary progress, I begin with the French language. The distinction is due to its priority of age in Canada, as well as to the exceptional obstacles it has had to contend with. Indeed, considering the position of the Franco-Canadian population, which has been nothing less than a political and social struggle for upwards of a hundred years, it is a marvel that they have preserved the French language in anything like its native purity. Yet this feat has been accomplished. There are writers in the Province of Quebec whose style is up to the highest Parisian standard. Among these I may mention M. Faucher de St. Maurice whose account of his adventures in Mexico under Maximilian was so perfect that its Canadian authorship was publicly denied. I shall further instance Carle-Tou, the elegant *chroniqueur*; M. Hector Fabre, who has mastered the difficult art of *causeries*; and M. Chauveau, whose *recueils mensuels*, in the "Education Journal," were models of French prose.

Within the past few years, Franco-Canadian writers have boldly attempted every branch of composition, and in each, several names have acquired lasting reputation.

Garneau's History of Canada is a work of high aim, solid, learned, and written in that severe style which recalls the manner of Guizot, Barante and DeGerlaché. There may be different opinions about its impartiality, but its literary excellence is beyond cavil. Garneau was followed in the same sphere by the Abbé Ferland, whose untimely death left unfinished what promised to be the most complete of the histories of New France. M. Benjamin Sulte has commenced the publication of the history of Three Rivers from the foundation of that ancient city down to the present day. The first series gives promise of an important work. M. Joseph Tassé has also issued several instalments of a book entitled *Les Canadiens de l'Ouest*, being the biographies of the adventurous men who founded so many towns in the Mississippi Valley, from Milwaukee to Mobile, and explored all the Far West, from Fort York to Walla Walla. M. Tassé is sometimes inaccurate in his information, but his work is in its nature interesting, and his easy style is well suited to the legendary character of his heroes. Other writers have taken up the lighter scraps of Canadian history, such as local traditions, antiquarian curiosities, monographs of distinguished men. Particularly successful among these are M. DeGaspé, author of *Les Anciens Canadiens*, and M. J. M. Lemoine, a gentleman equally at home in the English language, and whose *Maple Leaves* are quite commendable for their sketchiness. One writer has written the parliamentary annals of the country from the beginning of the century till the Union, in 1840, and another has continued the chronicle to the period of Confederation, 1857.

No country, from its peculiarities, presents a fairer field for fiction than does Lower Canada, and its writers have not been slow to improve their opportunity. Several of these novels are sure to live. M. Chauveau's *Charles Guérin* is a description of social manners; M. Gérin-Lajoie's *Jean Rivard* is a gossipy account of pioneer life in the Townships; M. DeBoucherville's *Une de l'Inde, deux de l'ouest* draws some of its materials from the rebellion of 1837-38, and contains an elaborate narrative of the battle of St. Denis. M. Bourassa's *Jacques et Marie* is a brilliant episode of the expulsion of French families from Nova Scotia by the British, another "Evangeline" hardly less touching than the story of Longfellow. M. Marmette, a young writer of Quebec, has lately put forth two historical novels, illustrative of the more ancient days of the Province. One is *François de Bienville*; the other, *L'Intendant Bigot*. And, as I write, there is announced still another romance from the pen of M. Legendre, a young author of the Pontmartin school, who is remarkable for the purity and finish of his style.

Of all the departments of literature, verse is notoriously the most beset by mediocrities and the most arduous even for genuine talent. Yet, here too, I find five names of French Canadians who have achieved a merited popularity. They are Crémazie, a Quebecker, standing at the head; Fréchette, of Lévis, author of *Men Louisa*; Lemay, of Lotbinière, the poet laureate of Laval University; Sulte, of Three Rivers, author of *Les Laurentiens*; and Prud'homme, of Montreal. I have read the works of these poets with a view to criticism, and they all struck me as giving indications of the highest culture. An enthusiastic gentleman, whose opinion I asked on the subject, told me that Crémazie was the Lamartine; Fréchette, the Hugo; Lemay, the Laprade; and Sulte, the Béranger, of Canada. Surely while he was at it, he might as well have christened Prud'homme the Canadian Barrier.

There is nothing like a good periodical to waken up young writers. In a new country, more especially where there must necessarily be plenty of latent talent, all it wants is half a chance to produce itself. This opportunity has often been afforded French Canadian authors. Formerly it was *Les Soirées Canadiennes*; now it is *La Revue Canadienne*. The latter is a monthly magazine published at Montreal, and already advanced in its eighth year. It has formed a galaxy of fine writers in history, philosophy, criticism, and the lighter works of the imagination. Conspicuous among these are M.M. De-

Bellefleur, Royal, DeMontigny, Dunn, Routhier and Trudel. Another service which this magazine has rendered is the publication of ancient manuscripts and official documents relating to the early history of the country. In this way, for the trifling sum of a yearly subscription, the reader may be made acquainted with valuable archives otherwise almost inaccessible.

The French population of Canada may be set down, in round numbers, at a million. Of this number, taking the usual average of ten per cent., not more than 100,000 can be said to be educated, and of the latter—according to another estimate—only a fourth, or 25,000, form what is called the reading public. Now, in view of these figures, the literary activity of French Canadians is a very noticeable fact; and, perhaps, when we come to compare it with the literary movement of other nationalities, we shall be forced to own that the former have proudly and successfully held their own against all rivals. A good word, then, for the Franco-Canadian literature.

II.

We all remember how long it took American writers to attain the honour of literary citizenship in England. It required no less than the genius of Irving to break down the barrier of exclusion. American national literature may be said to date from *The Sketch Book*, and now the popular authors of the United States are as much read in Britain as they are at home.

Canadian literature had precisely the same obstacle to meet, or rather its task was still more difficult, for it had to fight its way into the neighbouring Republic as well as into the mother country. But it, too, has succeeded in partially accomplishing the double triumph. And, singularly enough, it owes this recognition to its poets.

I make no doubt that here, as elsewhere, there has been a prodigious amount of ephemeral verse, which, if collected, would make a most grotesque collection, it being the amiable weakness of every young man conscious of his own talent, to imagine that he must first court public favour in the language of song. But setting these versifiers aside, I find the names of five true Canadian poets.

The first of these, who attracted attention on both sides of the Atlantic, is Charles Heavyside. His works are not the pleasantest reading, and they are far from being faultless, but they have the great merit of originality, which, in this age of parrots, is a quality that must condone many deficiencies. Next comes John Reade, an imitator of Tennyson, whose *Good Night* to his sweetheart is as genuine a bit of inspiration as can be found in any poet, ancient or modern. Charles Mair reminds one of Swinburne. His lyricism is of a lofty flight, and his eye for the picturesque, as exhibited in *Canadian Nature*, is that of a born artist. Surely this writer is not going to spend the rest of his days selling wet and dry groceries under the stockades of Fort Garry. Such a trade may pay him better than verse, but, after all, cannot fame be allied with fortune? Charles Sangster and Isidore Ascher stand well on the list of minor poets, and like all authors of their class, there are passages or detached pieces of their works which are so good that if in each case it were possible, as it is not, to raise the rest of the book to the same level, these poets would stand on the very pinnacle of excellence. Inequality is more common in verse than in any other department of literature.

For some reason that I cannot determine, Canadian works of fiction are neither numerous nor of the highest class, though I will not be surprised if the next important publication announced to the country proves to be a splendid novel.

The series of Madame Leprohon is chiefly devoted to the delineation of social manners at or before the time of the Conquest. Of these *The Manor House of De Villiers* appears to me the best. That work, with *Antoinette De Merceuil* and *Mlle Dunmore*, certainly place the authoress at the head of Canadian novelists.

Mrs. Moodie has more individuality. Apart from their literary merit, her *Roughing it in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings* have a force of realism about them which accounts for their reputation both in England and the United States. Mrs. Noel's best works are *The Secret of Stanley Hall* and *The Merchant's Secret*.

In the domain of history, I find a multiplicity of pamphlets, short notices, and partial relations, but critical research of any extent seems to have been left to the transactions of the Historical Societies. I am not surprised at this, being aware that the pursuit of history requires much time, involves considerable expenditure for the purposes of investigation, and, in these days of superficial reading, is less patronized by the public than it ought to be. There is, however, a good translation of Garneau's History by Bell; and Christie's History of Lower Canada is the only one which we have in English that is at all based on official documents and *pièces justificatives*. Croil, Canniff, Coffin may be consulted with advantage, but the history of Canada from the British standpoint has yet to be written. So have the histories of each of the Provinces. Old Judge Haliburton's work on Nova Scotia was very well fifty years ago, but no one would care to read it today, even if it were reprinted.

My attention has been called to a very singular fact, observable, I believe, no where outside of Canada. It is that most of the young literary men of the country, both French and English, are, or have been, in the civil service. In most cases these youths, discouraged with the prospect of living by their pens, have sought an honourable refuge and a good salary in some Government office. I have been assured that in some cases, where a young writer, dabbling in politics—as they generally do here—has annoyed the authorities by his attacks, these have found means of silencing them with an official appointment. *C'est ainsi qu'on a étouffé tous nos jeunes talents*, said a gentleman to me lately. But be the reason what it will, it is certain that such well-known writers as Morgan, Todd, Taylor, Futvoye, Taché, Lajoie, Gélinas, Harvey, Parent, and many others, are residents of Ottawa. Fortunately, the leisure which they enjoy, and their free access to the large Parliamentary library, gives these gentlemen the opportunity, which they might not otherwise find, of prosecuting their literary studies. So far from any objection being made to this arrangement, I think it speaks well for the country that it thus encourages men of letters.

In the natural sciences the record of Canada is decidedly good. The geological survey has been thoroughly made, and it has brought out a number of eminent men. Sir William Logan and Dr. Sterry Hunt are as well known on the continent

* Mr. Harvey has retired from the Civil Service.—[Ed. C. L. N.]