

contemporary French and English authors. Le Caveau, l'Equipe and les Compagnons have attained high levels in the production of major dramas and comedies, the latter group being awarded the Bessborough Trophy last year in London, Ontario, for its staging of Molière's Le Médecin malgré lui. Finally, many of our good writers produce radio sketches and plays which, in my opinion, are comparable to what is done anywhere else. In a word, French-Canadian literature is advancing with giant strides and is coming of age.

This outer growth is accompanied by a inner crisis. Its most obvious symptom has been this long and interesting debate I referred to a moment ago, in which two schools of thought have come to light; the first maintaining that our writers should endeavour to enlist themselves in one or another of the various French schools; the second urging us to find in ourselves the necessary powers to create literature of our own. This problem of the French influence on our letters has frequently been discussed in the past century, but never at such length and so seriously as in the last two years. Accordingly, it seems advisable for me to emphasize here the broad lines of this debate, before engaging in the survey of the most noteworthy achievements of our native writers in the past ten years.

In the first issue of Poésie 46, a French review republished in Canada, René Garneau, book reviewer of the Montreal daily newspaper Le Canada, expressed his personal views on the present condition of the French-Canadian author. His article, entitled Le Solitaire et sa solitude, posed the problem clearly and aroused a general debate. The main spokesman of the opposing group is the novelist Robert Charbonneau whose stand has, in turn, been disputed by many French writers. Both Garneau and Charbonneau have the support of many confreres. This has given rise to two schools of thought which, in my opinion, deserve comment in appraising recent achievements of French-Canadian letters.

René Garneau considers that "the literary position of French-speaking Canada is more tragic than ever" and that "France, which was already far from us in 1939, is still farther now, and instead of being behind Paris as we were before, we are a world, a war and a revolution late." He then adds that "Canadian poets and novelists are lost, unable to attain success either in France or in the United States." I wish to state now that this assertion has been contradicted by the facts. Gabrielle Roy's Bonheur d'Occasion (the English translation of which is known as "The Tin Flute") has been greeted in the United States and in France as no other French-Canadian novel in the past. The sale of its English translation now numbers hundreds of thousands of copies, and republished in France, it was recently awarded the "Prix Fémina" and has been widely read there too. Another French-Canadian novel, Roger Lemelin's Au pied de la pente douce has also been translated into English and is coming out in New York next week under the title "The Town Below." A third novel, Germaine Guèvremont's Le Survenant has also been awarded a French literary prize and has received high praise from the most distinguished French critics.

Even if Garneau were right in stating that our writers cannot obtain success abroad, I would still disagree

/with him.