

Contributed Articles.

A NASCENT LITERATURE.

THAT French Canada does not possess, in the strict sense of the term, a literature of its own, can hardly be contested. This would imply the creation of a civilization, that is to say, a language, a literary mould and a succession of master-pieces. Now French Canada has derived all this from old France, which the French Canadian still considers as the source of his inspiration, the creator of literary form and the arbiter of taste. In reality, therefore, French Canadian literature can only be the continuation, on a new soil, of French literature, holding the relation of a daughter to her mother.

But, while receiving from its parents its language, its general ideas and its first inspiration, a child may modify them with increasing years, especially by study, by travel, and by ultimately settling in a foreign country. It cannot be otherwise with the French Canadian. The country which he inhabits, the conditions of existence imposed on him, and his surroundings must necessarily modify the temper of his genius, his ideas, his aspirations, his way of looking at men and things—and, in a word, force him to produce a distinct variation in civilization. And as literature is the expression of every civilization, it must be inferred that French Canada must necessarily exhibit a variation from French literature. It will remain French, while presenting at the same time elements, characteristics and tendencies which will entitle it to be called French Canadian.

The history of this literature is neither long nor wonderful to relate, for it is still too near its birth. But its existence has begun, and what astonishes one most is that it should have been born in the midst of a people which is still in the stage of childhood, and which has almost constantly had to fight for its very existence against foes who threatened destruction on every hand, and without respite. When I consider the obstacles which it had to overcome, I wonder that this literature should ever have succeeded in