

CANADIAN LITERATURE.

ON WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN IT.

ARTEMAS WARD'S father declared literature to be low. We may be inclined to take exception to this. However, a popular and very similar belief generally and unjustly obtains in Canada. The consequence is, that poetry has been below par, and that each publication has been consigned to the trunkmakers and greengrocers of the metropolis.

Some persevering people, with a devotion worthy a better cause, continue to rhyme. We cannot pause to enumerate every one who has written in Canada. Neither have we read all Canadian poetry. Neither do we wish to. We merely wish to review the course of Canadian literature, so as to bring our readers up to the present time.

We may commence with Mr. SANGSTER,* a Canadian writer, whose poetry is less read than it should be. He is more truly national, and less rhythmically offensive, than the rest of our poets. We may, at a future date, review his poems *in extenso*.

Mr. HEAVYSEGE has written *Saul*, and *Jephthah's Daughter*, which are epics. Not that we approve of selecting such subjects. The mind of the reader, instinctively compares these heroics with the simple Scriptural originals. One's heart does not beat in time with these venerable, but we dare say respectable persons. Their life and sentiment have nothing in common with ours of to-day. Consequently Mr. HEAVYSEGE is but little read. His language, too, at times, is inclined to be quaint, and crabbed—and yet some passages of his poems, more especially in his sonnets, are true Catholic poetry, lines with a man's heart beating in them. His blank verse has always seemed to us imperfect. Blank verse has other important requirements to fill besides that of containing ten syllables. The occurrence of such little words as "the" and "nor" at the end of a line, is, in a gentleman of his poetic taste, simply inexcusable.

Mr. PROCTOR, author of *Voices of the Night*, has a more varied and studied versification than any other of our provincial poets. His poetry claims to teach, at least, some lesson to its readers, and to do so with a voice of melody. Especially do his poems on the Indian mutiny commend themselves to his readers. As to his poems of regretting and loving—there is an undue amount of scenery, and we may say *rant*, for the passion. *De plus*, we must charge Mr. PROCTOR with, at least a suspicion of being a copyist of Lord Macaulay, and Alfred Tennyson.

Finally comes Mr. ASCHER. We hardly know how to judge him. His poems are very unequal. His blank verse, witness *Pygmalion*, is utterly incorrect. Such lines as

"And sunned with light of joyous effort,"

or this

"Trembled with reverberating shocks of sound,"

cannot be accepted by any fair criticism. His rhymes are frequently loose, such as *Chippewas* with *stars*, and *harm* with *calm*. Some of his poems descend into nabby-pambyism. Such are *Katie*, and *The Maple Tree*. His poems were written in haste, perhaps, and necessitated some inequalities in preparing such a large collection as he published. Injudicious praise induced many to rank him so high, that his faults when discovered, seemed doubly great. That unfortunate preface to his poems left an impression, that he could not write prose, on every one's mind. So much for his faults. Let us give him credit for being a lover of the ideals of home and the hearth. In this fast age it is not fashionable to our home influences and quiet tastes. Mr. ASCHER sings so reverently of his home and fire-side, that we instinctively reverence him therefore. No till was his epigraph selected,

"True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

And in such poems as *Only a Plank*, *Thanksgiving*, *Under the Trees*, and *Indian-summer*, he appeals to us in a quiet, scholarly, pensive tone, which is for Canada peculiarly his own. We may be inclined to differ with his views of society,

* *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, and other Poems*: CHARLES SANGSTER.

and to doubt whether young ladies will flaxen hair always jilt their lovers for millionaires, but we must calmly pronounce him an amiable and an unassuming man if not a perfect poet.

These four writers may be called the Canadian poets. There are still half a dozen volumes upon our table of native poetry, through which we have glanced,—and waded sometimes. Indeed our minor poets are to our mind our best, and of these McCARROLL'S poems, more thoroughly accord with our idea of a minor poem, than do those of any other writer in Canada, THE FOREST BIRD not excepted. Our lady authors and our other poets will claim our attention at a future period.

Thus briefly, have we candidly stated the progress of Provincial poetry. The graver departments of literature will soon claim our attention.

Canada is in an anomalous literary position. The taste of her public is so mature that her authors must be men of talent and wholly devoted to their work. At the same time the country is so poor that literature will not pay as a profession, unless it be commercial or political. Thus our authors can rarely find a position in life affording an easy competency, and yet that leisure for study which is indispensable to success. Again: our authors have never appealed directly to the hearts of their readers. They might be national in the true sense of the word.—Instead of this, they try to satisfy our mental cravings with a dish of beaver, stewed in maple leaves. No one has as yet given us the simple songs of his experience, his love, his longing after home, his enjoyment, and that life of the heart which we all live. Such a poet will be the first man to popularize poetry among us. So we think.

—*Allid.*

DAWN OF CANADIAN HISTORY.

The return of Sieur de Monts left New France entirely abandoned by the French, nevertheless, the next year, 1608, he constituted Champlain his lieutenant, and authorized him to make a voyage of discovery in the river St. Lawrence. This task Champlain gallantly accomplished, and founded the residence of Quebec.

Now, the Sieur Jean de Biencourt, called de Potrincoirt, before de Monts left New France, asked the latter to make him a gift of Port Royal. The Sieur de Monts did so, on the understanding that, during the next two years, de Potrincoirt should immigrate thither, bringing along with him many other families, for the purpose of civilizing and peopling the new possessions. De Potrincoirt promised to perform what de Monts desired. In 1607, the French colony having returned home, as has been already stated, de Potrincoirt asked Henry the Fourth to confirm the gift of de Monts. The king consented, and at the same time, resolving to place the new French colony on a firm basis, told his confessor, Father Coton, that he desired to make use of the religious Order to which this ecclesiastic belonged, in the work of converting the savages. The king commanded Father Coton to write to the Superior of the Jesuits, in order that the latter might select those who should be disposed to undertake the voyage across the ocean. His Majesty also informed Father Coton that he would summon these Jesuit missionaries the first opportunity, and promised two thousand pounds for their maintenance. Father Coton obeyed the command of the king, and it was very soon understood throughout all the Jesuit colleges, in France, that from them were to be selected a number of men for missionary purposes. Many came forward, and among others Father Biard, at that time teaching theology in Lyons. He was chosen, and was sent to Bordeaux at the end of 1608, for it was thought at Lyons the project of so powerful a monarch as Henry the Fourth, after having been made known for so many months, could not but be near its accomplishment. But Father Biard was deceived both as to place and time; for at Bordeaux people were astonished when they heard of the object of his visit, for at that place there was no sign of any expedition setting sail for Canada.

Towards the end of the next year, 1609, the Sieur de Potrincoirt came to Paris. The king, who thought he had crossed the sea, soon after

having obtained confirmation of the gift of Port-Royal, having learnt that he had not stirred from France, was displeased with him.—The Sieur was much concerned, and made answer, that since his Majesty had this affair so much at heart, he would now take leave of him, and from that moment would set himself about making preparations for the voyage.—Now, Father Coton, who was disheartened on account of Father Biard, having heard of the leave-taking of de Potrincoirt, sought him out, and offered him the companionship of some of the Jesuits. The reply was, that it would be better to wait till the year following; de Potrincoirt stating as soon as he arrived at Port Royal he would send back his son to France; and that, everything being better arranged, those whom it pleased the king to send might cross the ocean along with him. Thereupon de Potrincoirt left Paris, and consumed all the winter in making preparation.

The next year, 1610, he embarked at the end of February, and arrived very late at Port-Royal, not reaching that place sooner than the beginning of June. And the 24th of the same month, St. John the Baptist's day, he brought together as many savages as he could, and had some twenty-four or five of them baptized by a priest called Messire Jossé Flesche, surnamed the Patriarch. A little while afterwards he sent his son, Sieur de Biencourt, a young man about nineteen years of age, to France, to carry thither the news of the baptism of these savages, and convey speedy succour to Port Royal, for the party were very badly provided with the means of keeping away hunger during the winter.

De Potrincoirt based the finding of supplies on a partnership he had formed with the Sieur Thomas Robin, dit Coloignes, a young man who was heir of a noble family; by the terms of this partnership it was agreed that de Coloignes should furnish the settlement of Port Royal, for a period of five years, with all things necessary, and provide abundant means to enable trade to be carried on with the savages. In return for the outlay he was to receive equivalent emoluments. De Coloignes and Biencourt arrived in Paris in the month of August, and it was by them that the Court became acquainted with the baptisms, and new conversions already mentioned.

Now "Madame the Marchioness of Guercheville, among her other rare and singular virtues, being ardently devoted to the glory of God and the conversion of souls," seeing that so fine an opportunity presented itself, asked Father Coton if, at this time, some of his Company were not going to new France? Father Coton replied he was very much astonished at the Sieur de Potrincoirt, who had promised him that on sending back his son, he would summon those of the Order who had been delegated by the king, and that notwithstanding this, de Potrincoirt had made no mention of them, neither in his letters nor in his commands. Madame the Marchioness wished to know how the business stood, and inquired of de Coloignes, who replied that all charge of the embarkation had been entrusted to him; that he had no particular commission as far as the Jesuits were concerned; nevertheless, that he knew well enough de Potrincoirt would feel highly honoured to have them near him, that he, de Coloignes, would charge himself with their support, as he was also undertaking the rest of all the expense. "You will not be burthened with the expense," replied the Marchioness, "for the King defrays it." Thereupon de Coloignes communicated with the Provincial of the Order of the Jesuits, who, on these promises, directed Father Biard, then at Poitiers, to repair to Paris; and gave him for a companion, Father Enremont Masse, a native of Lyons. The two Jesuits, thus destined for the voyage to Canada, had a conference with the Sieurs Robin and Biencourt, and the place of departure was appointed at Dieppe the 24th October, the same year 1610; the two ecclesiastics were informed that at that time everything would be ready if the wind and tide were favourable. The Jesuits were very soon prepared. The Queen caused to be handed over to them five hundred crowns, promised by the late

* France had become the arbiter of Europe. Owing to her powerful mediation, the Pope and Venice had been reconciled, 1607. Spain and the United Provinces had at last ended their long conflict, 1609.