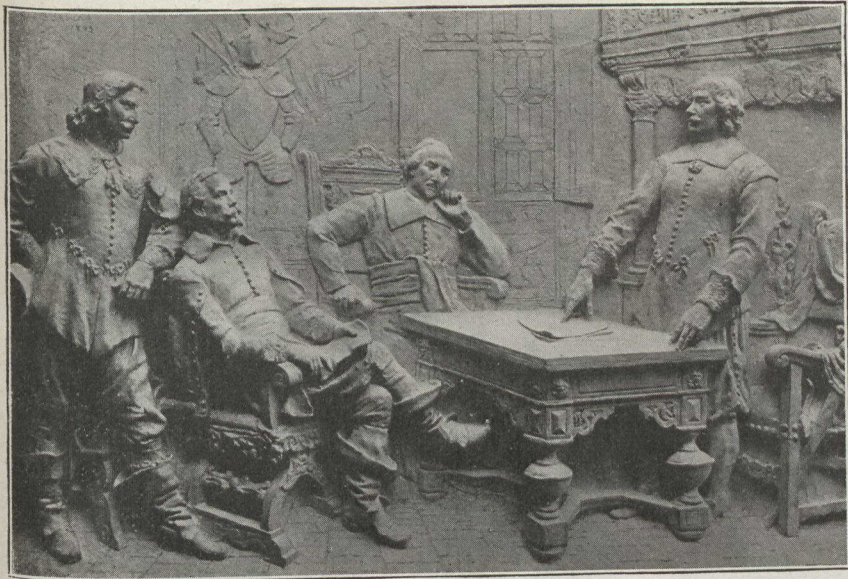




Bas-relief on the Maisonneuve Monument in Place D'Armes Square. Maisonneuve and his associates founding the town of Ville Marie, afterwards Montreal.



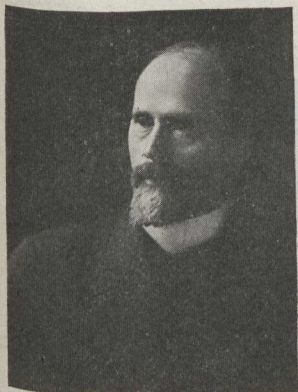
Madeleine de Vercheres. Presented to the McDonald Institute.

PHILIPPE HEBERT, SCULPTOR

Speaking in Bronze the Story of French Canada.

By M. J. MOUNT

IN years to come, when the history of the rise and progress of Art in Canada is written, Philippe Hebert's name will appear as that of our pioneer sculptor; he may also be called a national sculptor, for few have done as much as he to illustrate Canadian history.



Philippe Hebert.

As far back as 1882, we see the interest taken in his work, for, in a weekly newspaper published in Montreal at that time, "Canada First," among "Music, Art and Literature" notes, one reads: "Mr. Hebert, our young Canadian sculptor, whose studio is situated on St. Denis Street, and who has become very well and favourably known through his

modelling of the "de Salaberry" monument, we regret to learn, will not be represented at our forthcoming exhibition. He is very busy—carving in wood, life-sized figures of the Apostles. It is pleasant to know, at least in his case, that these orders will occupy his full time for twelve months to come."

These statues were for Notre Dame Church, Montreal, where they may still be seen.

Louis Philippe Hebert was born on the 27th of January, 1850; his parents were descendants of Acadians, who had settled in the county of Nicolet after the unfortunate events of 1755. Young Hebert was brought up in the rude life of pioneer farming, and from an early age he took great delight in following his father to the woods, and especially on his hunting trips.

Already, too, his childish mind felt the poetry of solitude, and at the age most boys look for companionship he would often pass hours by himself in the forest, fascinated; for the youth in his imagination pictured it overrun with wild Indians, as in the tales his father read to him.

At school, he took very little interest in anything but his slate, for which he was in constant disgrace by drawings of all sorts of Indians and animals; his evenings were passed by the fireside, drawing and carving toys by the side of his mother, for whose memory he has a tender veneration. To visitors in his studio he shows with pride her portrait that he carved, with the words: "A toi mere" (To thee, mother) in the frame. As a mere boy he was always whittling. One day, when he was about five, finding the root of a small tree which had somewhat the form of a foot, he carved it into a neat looking foot incased in a shoe.

One day, while on a visit to his studio, I noticed the statuette of a youth with a toy and knife in his hands, a baby sitting on his shoulders, holding on with its legs and arms. Such an affectionate look-

ing picture attracted my attention. I asked *le maitre* what it represented, and he told me that when a youth his mother often confided to his care a baby brother. For distraction, as well as to amuse the child, he would place it on his shoulders and go about, whittling toys for the youngster. When older he had made this in fond memory of the days of his boyhood, and of the little brother.

At the age of fourteen Hebert was placed with his uncle, who kept a country store. This stay was brief, however, as he had no disposition for business, and after awhile he was sent back home in disgrace, back to his father's farm, where he lived again a dreamy life until he was nineteen. When the Canadian contingent of the Papal Zouaves went to Rome to place itself at the disposal of the Pope he was one of the first to go. He devoted himself for the time being to this military career, faithfully going through all the duties that were required. Nevertheless, the moments at his disposal were passed in the churches and museums, which were to him marvels of beauty beyond his conception; St. Peter's, St. Paul, the Vatican, the Colona, the Capitol, the Pincio Gardens, were his daily pilgrimages, of which he never tired.

In those days the old picturesque life of the Eternal City, so dear to artists' eyes, was as yet quite unchanged. It was with some heart-ache that he tore himself away from this artists' Elysium, where he had found the element he longed for—to return to farming for three more years.

In the fall of 1873 he went to Montreal, where he exhibited a small wooden bust of "Beranger," at the Provincial Exhibition. This piece of work attracted the attention of Mr. Napoleon Bourassa, himself an artist, who engaged young Hebert to remain with him. This was the beginning of his artistic career. For several years he remained with his master, devoting his time to drawing, wood-carving, modelling and sculpture; following the courses at the "Arts and Manufactures" two evenings a week. Four years he worked in collaboration with Mr. Bourassa at the statuary and decorations of the Church of Notre Dame de Lourde, on St. Catherine Street. He read extensively, going through piles of literature dealing with art in all its branches, and with the history of art; understanding that the cultivation of the intellectual side of an artist's nature, influenced his work.

In 1879 Mr. Hebert received an order from Canon Bouillon, of Ottawa, intrusting to him the carving of all the statues in the Cathedral of that city. This extensive order occupied him several years. During his frequent trips to Ottawa at that time and later, he has had the advantage of meeting several noted persons who were particularly friendly to him, amongst whom were the sympathetic Benjamin Sulte, and Joseph Tasse, then editor of "La Minerve," through whose influence he was awarded the making of the statue erected to the late Sir George Etienne Cartier, in Ottawa. A competition took place, the Marquis of Lorne, at that time Governor-General of Canada, made the choice, selecting Philippe Hebert's.

Hebert always mentions with pleasure that the different Governors-General whom he had the signal honour of meeting, have at all times treated him with the highest marks of distinction and friendship. The Marquis of Lorne, the Earl of Minto, and Earl Grey particularly honoured and encouraged him on all occasions.

Twice Hebert had to make his home in Paris, where he remained altogether twelve years, to fulfill the many orders which his countrymen had intrusted to his care. There he became acquainted with many of the great French artists, Bartoldi, Rott, member of the Institute; Paul Dubois, President of the Ecole des Beaux Arts; Henri Dubois, who was always a precious friend to him; Jules Lefebvre, Jules Breton, and Leopold Maurice. His association with these masters, their experience and their criticism combined in forming his artistic education.

A visit to Hebert's studio down one of the little streets of the city, is a treat well worth while. He excels in the delicate and typically French style of *causerie*. His knowledge of Canadian history, its legends and folklore, are subjects with which he delightfully entertains his visitors, and from which he has culled many ideas to immortalize in bronze. His best work has taken shape under the direct inspiration of nature. That is why it is so distinctively Canadian, so racy of the soil, the stream, and the forest.

Many of his statuettes are neither history nor legend nor portraiture, but fancies inspired by his poetical temperament. Such is "Fleur des Bois," a delicate creation of a young lovelorn Indian maiden, on the base of which he wrote the line: "Car son coeur fut pris par guerrier blanc" (For her heart was captured by a warrior pale). Such again are "Le Reve du Fumeur," a man's hand holding the bowl of a pipe, through the curling smoke the form of a beautiful woman; "Inspiration," a vision guiding the sculptor's hand in his work, and many other exquisite miniatures in bronze and terra-cotta.

In one corner of his studio there stands a group, "Sans Merci," representing the struggle between Civilization and Savagery. Two figures locked in a death grapple, the Indian's teeth meeting in the flesh of the settler's arm, the settler with a sickle uplifted over his enemy. This group, and a life-size "Crucifix" of plaster, which he presented to St. James' Cathedral, Montreal, are considered by many his masterpieces.

The most sympathetic artist is always the one who describes his native soil. Race detracts nothing from individuality. It elevates, it broadens, it fills with treasures of ancestral and sentimental thoughts. The artist of his race is the spokesman of departed generations to future generations. It is not the lonely artist, it is the dead of other days who speak and tell of things that will live forever.

Hebert is of the sod. He has illustrated many of the earlier pages of Canadian history, its deeds of heroism, as: "Lemoine d'Iberville," "Martine Messier," "Les Acadiens," (group), a family of exiles clinging to one another in the midst of their meagre possessions, rescued from the wreck of their homes, and "Madeleine de Vercheres." The last-mentioned was lately presented to the High school by a Montreal lady, to be given as a prize for general proficiency. A professor of McGill University also presented one to the McDonald Institute.



Heroic Study in Canadian History.