

A HABITAN HERCULES.

BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

I had a good deal of difficulty in locating this hero. A passing reference to his wonderful feats put me upon his track some years ago, but it was only the other day that I succeeded in running him to earth in a modest little brochure entitled "*Histoire de Montferrand — L'Athlete Canadien*," wherein Monsieur Benjamin Sulte, well known in Canada for his valuable historical essays, has with characteristic diligence and accuracy gathered together all that was authentic concerning his inspiring subject.

At the opening of the present century there lived in Montreal a couple named Montferrand who were not less noted for strength of body than for worth of character. The man in his younger days had been a guide and trapper in the employ of the renowned North-west Fur Company, and had won the reputation of never failing to respond to a challenge, and of never having been beaten in a fair fight. He was the pride of his French-Canadian companions. His wife was a fit mate for him. It is told of her that one day seeing a big bully maltreating a child she sprang at him like a tigress and inflicted such injuries upon him that when he got out of her hands he was scarcely recognizable.

To these giants there came in the year 1802 a son who received the name Joseph, and who was destined to become to French Canada what Robin Hood was to England or Rob Roy to Scotland—the popular beau-ideal of muscular might and agility irradiated by an unselfish chivalry and winning geniality.

Before he was well into his teens Joseph found himself the lion of his neighborhood owing to an exploit which gave sure promise of future

fame. He was engaged at an excavation in front of his father's house when a noted bully named Duranteau came down the street accompanied by two birds of the same feather. Duranteau thought it a clever joke to put his huge foot on top of Joseph's head which happened to be on a level with the ground. With a single bound the boy sprang out of the hole and threw himself upon his insulter with such startling vigor that almost before he realized the situation the latter, who had never before met his master, was soundly thrashed and his companions put to flight. The *quartier St. Laurent* rang with Joseph's praises for the next nine days.

Now, to win the suffrages of the *quartier St. Laurent* of that day was to acquire a reputation as wide as French Canada itself. It was, in some respects the most notable quarter of Montreal. There were the chief hostelries and thither came the larger part of the travelling public. The "manly art" was in high favor then, and no establishment considered itself complete without a *salle de boxe*, which was hardly less frequented than the adjoining tap-room. Not only the "sports" of the city, but gentlemen of the highest social rank, the officers of garrison, and even the ladies freely patronized the boxing matches that were constantly taking place. Everything was done in strict accordance with the most approved rules of the P. R. A clever upper cut became the object of ardent discussion, and the inventor of a novel blow would win the praises and congratulation of thousands of excited spectators.

It was but natural that a lad possessing Montferrand's remarkable strength and agility should take kind-