

—Oui, mais qu'est-ce je vais devenir sans toi?

—Ah! laissez faire, m'sieu le curé, vous verrez comme tout ça s'arrangera bien. . . .

Au bedeau, qui entr'ait, Suzon dit malicieusement:

Zéphirin, je te présente m'sieu et madame Boisvert."

The consequent revenge of le bedeau has neither rhyme or reason in its Zolaesque touches. But nothing except a first hand perusal can convey an idea of the vividness and naturalness of the whole. Scene after scene passes before the eyes with all realism of life itself. It is the true picture of the ways and thoughts of "les habitants" of Quebec. But various scenes, in particular the latter chapters of the book, have a broad and even unsavoury realism of the stables that mars what otherwise is an excellent novel.

As may be naturally supposed this introduction into Canada of the church-banned, excommunicated, ostracized realism of naturalists like Emile Zola raised a storm. Even more audacious than the good clerics of Montreal had ever dreamed of, he essayed to picture the country life of a Quebec village through a pair of borrowed realist spectacles perched on the impudent nose of youth. And woe betide the bookseller in Quebec to-day who dare display a book of Zola in his window. But here was one of their own flock determined to out-Zola Zola himself. From the critical point of view to attain this M. Girard has introduced numerous gauloiseries that are needless. But of the truth of the general picture, of the biographical touches in the book there can be no doubt. It is the first great novel Canada has produced in either French or English. For it rises above the stories we merely read to pass away an idle hour. Indeed no historian, no chronicler who wishes to paint a true version of life fifty years ago in French Canada can afford to be without it.

Intimidated by the storm of indignation he had succeeded in raising and an attendant law suit, which, however, was decided in his favour, M. Girard in his next work turned for material to the old French régime in Canada. "L'Algonquien" is hardly a success as an historical novel for it is grossly inaccurate and as a romance it is too palpably impossible. Sir Gilbert Parker's "Seats of the Mighty" and C. D. Roberts's "A Sister to Evangeline" still remain the best works of the Canadian contribution to this kind of writing.