

Desrosiers believes that the history of all nations is "the best and the greatest of all romances, provided we read it with some imagination." His first narrative, Nord-Sud, was but a succession of sketches of the customs of the French-Canadians in the middle of the last century. Les Engagés du Grand Portage, on the other hand, was not only a large, coherent and lively fresco inspired by the adventures of the "coureurs des bois" and the strife of the fur-traders in the North-West Territories in the first years of the nineteenth-century but it was also a thorough study of the development of cruelty and pride in the soul of an ambitious man. The plot of this novel is well planned, the narration strongly built and the characters finely animated. The same qualities are found again in a later historical novel, Les Cpiniâtres, which recreates the adventures of the first settlers of Trois-Rivières. This great work is animated by the virtues and high ideals of those pioneers who took possession of this great country of ours, mastered its wilderness and were the first to bring to this part of the new world the birthright of western civilization.

Two young novelists, Pierre Benoit and Marcel Trudel, have followed Desrosiers' example, but they have not yet reached his excellence. Most of the best novelists of the new generation, such as Germaine Guèvremont, Roger Lemelin, Robert Charbonneau and Gabrielle Roy, have taken, on the other hand, their themes from contemporary life in Canada.

It is not without significance that, up to five years ago, our best novelists were more attracted by the simple manners of our country people and the picturesque scenery of our old French villages, than by the common atmosphere of our cities and the ordinary lives of our townsmen. Only recently have a few Canadian novelists endeavoured to analyse thoroughly the complexities of the human soul in psychological novels. The French-Canadian novel is traditionally simple and rustic, and this tradition is brilliantly perpetuated to-day by Germaine Guèvremont who, in my opinion, surpasses all her predecessors in that field.

Guèvremont's only novel, which is in two volumes, Le Survenant and Marie-Didace, constitutes a highly poetical description of the life of the French-Canadian peasantry. In her work, the landscape is not merely a background incidental to her characters, but both are in harmony. No other French-Canadian novelist, except Gabrielle Roy, has, in my opinion, achieved as yet such a unity of atmosphere and action, a style so distinctly Canadian. The behavior of her characters is closely connected with their environment, their conversation is in tune with their daily actions, and the newcomer himself is fully in harmony with the small rural community which his short stay throws into confusion. The novel of Germaine Guèvremont is a major contribution towards the development of a distinctly Canadian style.

It is worthy of mention here that the two most remarkable and two most deeply human novels of recent years have been produced by women. While Le Survenant has a rural setting, Gabrielle Roy's Bonheur d'Occasion is a realistic description of the difficult life of the common people of a Montreal suburb. The most important plot deals with a poor waitress who, forsaken by an ambitious young man with whom she

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