

closing days of the French régime—the days of the infamous intendant Bigot, who fattened on Canadian misery—does not show the finished art of the skilled novelist, but it has a certain crude vigor of its own which has enabled it to live while so many other Canadian books have died. French Canada is even weak in this particular, and this is the more surprising because there is abundance of material for the novelist or the writer of romance in her peculiar society and institutions and in her historic annals and traditions. It is true that we have a work by De Gaspé, "Les Anciens Canadiens," which has been translated by Professor Roberts and one or two others, but it has rather the value of historical annals than the spirit and form of true romance.

It must not be imagined, however, from their failure for so many years to cultivate successfully this popular branch of letters, that Canadians are wanting in the inventive and imaginative faculty, and that the spirit of materialism and practical habits, which has so long necessarily cramped literary effort in the country, still prevents happy ventures in this direction. Mr. Gilbert Parker, now a resident in London, but a Canadian by birth, education and sympathies, is animated by a laudable ambition to give form and vitality to the abundant materials that exist in the Dominion among the inhabitants of the old seigneuries of the French Province—materials to be gathered from that historic past of which the ruins still remain in Montreal and Quebec, in the Northwest with its quarrels of adventurers in the fur trade, and in the many other sources of inspiration that exist in this country for the true story-teller, the one who can invent a plot and give his creations a touch of reality, different from that doll-like sawdust appearance that the vapid characters of some Canadian stories assume from the very poverty of the imagination that has originated them. His most popular book, "The Seats of the Mighty," the scenes of which are laid also in that old city whose rocks recall such a deeply interesting past, shows that he possesses that inventive faculty, that power to construct and carry out a skillful plot, that deep insight into human motives, that power to conceive original characters—such as "Voltaire," a strange compound of cynic, conspirator, philosopher, "master-devil"—which are necessary to the author of romance if his work is ever to have more than an evanescent fame. While "The Seats of the Mighty" is probably the greater novel, his previous story, "When Valmond Came to Pontiac," is even more artistic in its treatment of a difficult subject, and in one respect more original in its conception. His sketches of the conditions of life in a little French Canadian community, where mystery and doubt surround a stranger who claims to be a son of