

our best poets deserve more attention than they yet been given at home and abroad. Some of the most finished poems published in the past ten years have a universality of appeal and a true distinction in style and inspiration.

Let us now come to the novelists and short story writers. From the beginning of our literature to the years which preceded the last war, poetry was always on a higher level than the novel. The novelists Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie and Joseph Marmette did not, on the whole, constitute as imposing a group as did the poets Octave Crémazie, Louis Fréchette, Pamphyle Lemay and William Chapman. Similarly, a generation later, the novels of Laure Conan, Napoléon Bourassa and Jules-Paul Tardivel did not reach the high standard attained in the best poetical works by Alfred Garneau, Nérée Beauchemin and Emile Nelligan. The disparity between the two groups decreased progressively, though it was still noticeable twenty years ago when the novels of Jean-Charles Harvey, Harry Bernard, Robert de Roquebrune and Pierre Dupuy were not quite in a class with the poems of Paul Morin, Guy Delahaye, Alfred DesRochers and Robert Choquette.

But with the successive publication of Un homme et son péché by Claude-Henri Grignon, Les Engagés du Grand Portage by Léo-Paul Desrosiers, Lenaud, maître-graveur, by Félix-Antoine Savard; and 30 arpents by Ringuet, the novel forged ahead and, notwithstanding the remarkable poetical works mentioned a moment ago, kept the balance in its favour, thanks to novelists such as Germaine Guèvremont, Gabrielle Roy, Roger Lemelin and Robert Charbonneau.

Like most poets of their generation, the novelists Claude-Henri Grignon, Félix-Antoine Savard and Robert de Roquebrune, have not published any new novels in the past ten years. On the other hand, Lichelle LeNormand (Mrs. Léo-Paul Desrosiers), after minor romances and short stories, put out a charming novel about the friendship of four ladies, La plus belle chose du monde. Rex Desmarchais, after a rather mediocre beginning, has given us what might be considered as our most remarkable ideological novel, La Chesnaie. It is the story, severe and pessimistic, of the failure of a revolutionary movement to establish a dictatorship in the province of Quebec. At the conclusion, the author says that, even if the hero is dead and the secret society broken up, all is not ended because the idea survives. The main fault with this novel is that the author intervenes too often in the narration. In spite of its shortcomings, La Chesnaie is a strong and original novel.

Ringuet, whose 30 arpents is one of the masterpieces of our letters, has never again reached the level attained in his first novel and Fausse monnaie, published last year, is just a long short story written in a conventional style about an ordinary week-end spent by a group of young people in the Laurentians. François Hertel, for his part, after a first novel inspired by life in a boarding-school, has put out a trilogy of decreasing interest which is more a collection of metaphysical and psychological tales than three actual novels. The three books do not lack in originality, but the author forces his talent a little too much. The only novelist of that generation who has so far achieved many novels of distinction is Léo-Paul Desrosiers, our best historical novelist.