

FLEURY MESPLET, THE FIRST PRINTER AT MONTREAL.

Printing, it may be claimed, was introduced into Canada in three well defined instalments; all truly original, catering, as they did, for widely divergent classes as well as sections of the country. Each in its own way is a record making epoch, as it marked the beginning of—aye, rather introduced the means of awakening—literary instincts amongst those of different thoughts and aspirations.

The first of these dates back to 1751, when Bartholomew Green, son of the man who printed the first American newspaper, came from Boston and set up a press in Halifax, the newly founded capital of Nova Scotia. He died a few months after his arrival, but his place was taken by John Burshell who, in March, 1752, commenced the *Halifax Gazette*, the first Canadian newspaper.

The second of these epochs was introduced by the firm of Brown & Gilmore, which came from Philadelphia in 1764, and opened up an establishment in Quebec, to print the *Quebec Gazette* and other official matter for the government organized under British auspices. As this publication set out more especially to supply the English element and British interests, although printed in both languages, the French being mainly translations, the whole tone was English in idiom and thought.

The third introduction, notwithstanding having come twenty-five years later than the first, was even more important for ever since, nay, even some years before they came under British rule, the "new subjects," as they were then called, had been altogether isolated from *La Mère patrie*. In the meantime, having been accorded a greater measure of liberty than they had hitherto enjoyed, they began to develop in a different direction. Thus the two French-speaking peoples grew wider and wider apart so that, after sixteen years of this separation, the Canadian section was found without an indigenous literature—it never had a press of its own—voicing its own thoughts and aspirations, or the means of developing and recording such tendencies. Thus it was, that, when Mesplet came to Montreal and set up his press, although under the auspices of the high priest of their erstwhile enemies—the hated Bastonnais—he, as one speaking their own language and one who could reproduce in print their own sentiments, was welcomed by the people with open arms.

Although very little has been recorded of Mesplet's early history, yet, having come across a number of documents bearing on his sojourn in Canada and the difficulties with which he had to contend as a pioneer printer out of sympathy with the government, I reproduce them here