

## TRIFLES FROM MY PORTFOLIO.

BY J. M. LEMOINE.

*Le Droit de Grenouillage—Corvées—Forced labour—Lent—Clameur de Haro—The 26th Battery—A Druidical Custom preserved—Running the Ignolee, &c.*

Under the caption "Tit-bits of Feudal Customs and Rights" I noticed, elsewhere, some quaint remnants of Feudalism on Canadian soil, contrasting the mild form of our Feudal mothers, with the endless and vexatious rights once enforced in France. Germany, England, &c. It is difficult to say, whether some of the European feudal rights were more tyrannous than ludicrous. The *Droit de Grenouillage* belonged eminently to the latter class. It consisted in the right of compelling the serfs to turn out on the wedding night of the lord of the manor, to heat the frog ponds, in order that his lordship's rest on such an auspicious occasion might not be disturbed by the noisy croakings of frogs. I added on the authority of M. Dupin, that certain jolly friars, such as the Abbé de Luxeuil and the Abbé de Priim stood also charged with enforcing this Sardanapalian service, not of course on their wedding night (for none but bad abbés married in those times) but whenever they resided on their domains witness the following lines:

Pâ! Pâ! rainatte Pâ (silence, frogs, silence).  
Voici monsieur l'abbé que Dieu gâ (near you rests monsieur l'abbé, whom may heaven watch over!)

Not only were the peasants compelled to heat the frog ponds, but during the operation, in order to keep awake, they were expected to croak out (in a subdued voice, we should imagine) this formula.

The performance of the croaking service was confined to those vassals whose land had on that express condition been freed from *servitudes*. In ransacking this old treatise, I came across the case of a drowsy German emperor, who having sojourned over night in the village of Treinseun, was threatened with being kept sleepless by the *breck! breck!* of frogs: fortunately for his Highness, the peasantry mustered strong and in time to compel aristocratic boisterous heroes to hide their diminished head, under the waters; this instance of loyalty, patriotism and love of the institutions of the Vaterland was so highly prized by the German Prince that he granted them important immunities: though the *Droit de Grenouillage*, may in several instances been considered a special seigniorial privilege guaranteeing a baronial benedict a sound sleep on his wedding night, it appears to have been extended, as in the case lastly cited, to ordinary occasions, when a wearied Feudal magnate required more than "forty winks." Its needless to say the *Droit de Grenouillage* never obtained a footing in Canada, nor the *Droit du Seigneur*. Many other seigniorial rights did, however, some very odious. The array was formidable enough; there was the *Droit de Lods et Ventes—Droit de retrait lignages—Droit de Quint—Droit de Four Banal—Droit de Corvées—Droit de cens et rentes—Droit de Colombes—Droit de Chasse—Droit de Perles*. The *Droit de Corvées*, may be found frequently resorted to under French Rule, previous to 1759.

We read in history of the *Corvées* or forced labor ordered by Count Frontenac, *de par le Roi*, to build Fort Cataract—Kingston—of the hardship it imposed on the sparse population, of its being the text of a lively sermon preached by the Abbé de Fenelon, the half brother of the famous Archbishop of Cambrai.

In the spring of 1759, when all New France was alarmed at the approach of Durell and Saunders' powerful fleet, we read again of *Corvées* ordered to build up at once, the earthwork (of which such unmistakable vestiges still remain in rear of Ringfield, the villa of Geo. H. Park, Esq., Charlesbourg road).

It had been at first contemplated by Montcalm to order down the whole of the Montreal militia, to hurry through with this circuitous fortification (Ringfield), wherein, after the battle of the 13th Sept., 1759, at twelve noon, the dispirited French squadron had assembled, leaving it, in a disorderly manner that evening at 8 P. M., to retreat to Cap Rouge and Fort Jacques Cartier. Ultimately, 1,500 labourers only were detailed to build this vast earthwork, which it was thought desirable to finish before General Wolfe should arrive.

Though very young at the time, I can yet recall the instance of a seigniorial *corvée*; it took place at St. Thomas, Montmagny, in 1837; its object was to haul to the river edge, the cut of timber of that winter, intended to supply seigneur Jacques Oliva's saw mills, at the basin of St. Thomas, a thaw was dreaded and had the snow disappeared in the woods the logs would have remained to rot and decay.

It was a case of life or death to the St. Thomas saw mill, which employed more than two hundred hands, annually, cutting logs or sawing them for use. The *Corvée*, by its novelty, gave rise to much discussion in the neighboring parishes; it occupied three or four days, as far as I can recollect; 300 villagers and their teams, turned out gratis because *le Seigneur a commandé de par le Roi*; the Seigneur, however, had to provide the commissariat, no small item of expense, considering that of the 300. Many sturdy Norman peasants could stow with ease, at a meal, a 6 lb. loaf of bread under their *ceinture rouge*, with a corresponding allowance of pork.

The two years I spent with an hospitable Scotch relative, at St. Thomas, (the late Daniel

McPherson) made me acquainted with the inner life of my worthy friend, *Jean Baptiste*, under a variety of aspects.

Well can I recall, the glutinous *reveillon*, among the mortified peasants, on Easter Eve, which at 12 midnight, closed the forty Lenten days of complete (not of partial as at present) abstinence from flesh, each day a fast day, without any of the *adoucissements*, of the present day. In many wealthy farm houses, the family circle would assemble about 7 P. M. cards were the back bone of the social, innumerable games of *all Fours*, *petite brisque*, *mistigris*, would be played, far into the night, without any interruption, except that caused by the temporary absence of the considerate housewife in the *bas-côté* or *cuisine*, to keep up the fire cooking the savory stew, goose, or turkey, which had to be done to the minute as soon, as the lofty old clock in the corner struck the fatidical hour of twelve, midnight; which had the privilege, not only of letting loose the *revenants* and *loup-garoux*, but also, O happiness! betokened the close of the dire Lenten season. Was the clock never advanced? All would then withdraw from cards and with the zest of long deprivation and that craving for animal food, which our keen winter atmosphere engenders among the working class, surround the well provided board: some, trenchermen there were of wonderful capacity and worthy of the lay of the past. I can remember, in 1837, I think, an instance of this gormandising: a young farmer, named Lemonde, had asked to be awake at 12, midnight, to enjoy, with the others, a *square* meal.

In his avidity to swallow, he kept no account of some small bones which occurred in a most succulent stew; one stuck in his throat and produced death by strangulation; this, however, was the only case of a tragical nature, which reached my juvenile ears in the orderly and sumptuous old Scotch house, which sheltered me.

Quebec.

(To be continued.)

## THE USE OF SHORT WORDS.

This world is a great school-house in which through life we all teach, and we all learn. Here we must study to find out what is good and what is bad; what is true and what is false, and thus get ready to act in some other sphere. What we are at the end of this life we shall be when the next begins. We must spare no pains, then, when we teach others or ourselves. We teach ourselves by what we hear and read and think, others by our words. We must take care that we think and speak in a way so clear that we do not cheat ourselves, or mislead others by vague or misty ideas. We must put our thoughts into words, and we must get in a way of using these in thought with the same care we use when we speak or write to others. Words give a body or form to our ideas, without which they are apt to be so foggy that we do not see where they are weak or false. When we put them into a body of words, we will, as a rule, learn how much of truth there is in them, for in that form we can turn them over in our minds. If we write them out, we find that in many cases the ideas we thought we had hold of fade away when put to this test. But if they prove to be real or of value, they are thus not only made clear to us, but they are in a shape where we can make them clear to others. We have a proof of how much we thus gain when we state to others our doubts; for, as a rule, we solve them, when we do this, before we hear what they have to say. In most cases what we say to others, not what they say to us when we consult them, settles the doubt.

We must not only think in words, but we must also try to use the best words, and those which in speech will put what is in our minds into the minds of others. This is the great art which those must gain who wish to teach in the school, the church, at the bar, or through the press. To do this in the right way, they should use the short words which we learn in early life, and which have the same sense to all classes of men. They are the best for the teacher, the orator and the poet. If you will look at what has been said in prose or in verse, that comes down to us through many years, which struck all minds, and that men must quote, you will find that they are short words of our own tongue. Count them in Gray's *Elegy*, which all love to read, and you will find that they make up a large share of all that he uses. The English of our Bible is good. Now and then some long words are found, and they always hurt the verses in which you find them. Take that which says, "Oh, ye generation of vipers who hath warned you to flee, from the wrath to come!" There is one long word which ought not to be in it, namely "generation." In the old version the word "brood" is used. Read the verse again with this term, and you feel its full force: "Oh, ye viper's brood, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

William H. Maynard, a very able man who stood high in his country and his state, once wrote out a speech for the Fourth of July in words of one syllable, save names. His strength was very much due to the fact that in thought and speech he made it a rule to use as few words as he could, and those that were short and clear. If he had lived out his term of three-score years, he would have been known as one of the great men of his state.

I do not mean to say that the mere fact that

the word is short makes it clear, but it is true that most clear words are short, that most long words we get from other tongues, and the mass of men do not know exactly what they mean, and I am not sure that scholars always get the same ideas from them. A word must be used a great deal, as short ones are, before it means the same thing to all.

Those who wish to teach or to lead others must first learn to think and speak in a clear way. The use of long words which we get from other tongues, not only makes our thoughts and our speech dim and hazy, but it has done somewhat to harm the morals of our people. Crime sometimes does not look like crime when it is set before us in the many folds of a long word. When a man steals and we call it "defalcation," we are at a loss to know if it is a blunder or a crime. If he does not tell the truth, and we are told that it is a case of "prevarication," it takes us some time to know just what we should think of it. No man will ever cheat himself into wrong-doing, nor will he be at a loss to judge of others, if he thinks and speaks of acts in clear, crisp terms. It is a good rule if one is at a loss to know if an act is right or wrong, to write it down in short, straight-out English.

He who will try to use short words and to shun long ones will, in a little while, not only learn that he can do so with ease, but that it will also make him more ready in the use of words of Greek and Latin origin when he needs them. If he tries to write in words of one syllable, he will find that he will run through a great many words to get those he needs. They are brought to his mind in his search for those he wants. It is a good way to learn words of all kinds. When a man is in search of one fact, he may be led to look at every book in his library, and thus he finds many things.

There is another gain when we try to use only short words. To bring them in and keep all others out, we have to take a great many views of the topic about which we write or speak. In this way we start many new thoughts and ideas that would not otherwise spring up. I am sure, if this plan is tried, men will be struck with the many phases brought to their view of things they study, that they would not see if they used words in their usual mode. In this way men not only learn more about words, but more about the topics of which they write, for they will not be able to carry out their plan without looking at their subject on every side.

Dr. Johnson loved long words. But when he wrote in wrath to Lord Chesterfield, he broke away from the fogs and clouds and roar of his five-syllable terms, and went at his lordship in a way so terse and sharp, that all can see that he felt what he said.

Love, nor hate, nor zeal, ever waste their force by use of involved or long-winded phrases. Short words are not vague sounds which lull us as they fall upon the ear. They have a clear ring which stirs our minds or touches our hearts. They best tell of joy or grief, of rage or peace, of life or death. They are felt by all for their terms mean the same thing to all men. We learn them in youth; they are on our lips through all days, and we utter them down to the close of life. They are the apt terms with which we speak of things which are high or great or noble. They are the grand words of our tongue; they teach us how the world was made. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light."

HON. HORATIO SEYMOUR.

## SKIPPER IRESON.

Whittier's ballad of the Marblehead skipper Floyd Ireson, who for his hard heart was tarred and feathered and carried in a cart, is one of the most familiar of his poems. But a history of Marblehead, by Samuel Roads, jr., which is just published, gives another version of the story, and to the credit of the skipper. It was in October, 1808, that the schooner *Betty*, commanded by Skipper Benjamin Ireson, arrived in Marblehead from the Grand Banks. The crew alleged that off Cape Cod Light they had passed the schooner *Active*, of Portland, in a sinking condition, and that Skipper Ireson had refused to stop or to lend any assistance to the wrecked sailors.

There was great indignation among the seafaring population of Marblehead, and on a bright moonlight night a mob seized the skipper, and bound him, placed him in a dory, and smearing him with tar and covering him with feathers, dragged him in a cart toward Salem. The Salem authorities forbade the entrance of the mob into that town, and it returned to Marblehead. Throughout the ride the skipper was silent, but when he was released at his own door, he said, "I thank you for my ride, gentlemen, but you will live to regret it."

The facts presently appeared. When the *Active* was seen, a terrific gale was blowing. Skipper Ireson consulted his crew, and they refused to risk their lives to save others, and they would not even stay by the wrecked schooner until the storm fell, as the skipper proposed. When they reached Marblehead, fearing the wrath of the people, they laid the entire blame upon Skipper Ireson. It is pleasant to record that Mr. Whittier in the frankest and most characteristic way states that he was probably deceived. In a very cordial letter to Mr. Roads he says that he is glad the true story has at last been told, and told so well, adding:

"I have now no doubt that the version of the Skipper Ireson is a correct one. My verse was solely founded on a fragment of rhyme which I

heard from one of my early school-mates, a native of Marblehead. I supposed the story to which it referred dated back at least a century. I know nothing of the particulars, and the narrative of the ballad was pure fancy. I am glad, for the sake of truth and justice, that the real facts are given in thy book. I certainly would not knowingly do injustice to any one, dead or living."

## THE GLEANER.

A WRETCH in New England says that more people die there of doughnuts than of tobacco.

GAMBETTA is not alarmed about Rochefort's hostility, but his support would be embarrassing.

GENERAL GARIBALDI was one of the defeated candidates in the municipal elections held in Rome.

THE Queen will not go to Ireland this year, and it is stated that Her Majesty had no intention at any time of so doing.

THE conversion to Catholicism is announced of Lady Anne Isabella Blunt, the only granddaughter of Lord Byron.

"DR. TANNER took a square meal here before beginning his fast," is the announcement at a New York restaurant.

THE French revenue of \$600,000,000 is asserted to be the largest ever received from a population of thirty-six millions.

ALL the bishops, judges and other dignitaries who assisted at the coronation of Queen Victoria, forty-two years ago, are dead.

AN ENGLISH resident of Oporto writes that the shipments of wine thence have been much larger during the past ten years than during any other ten of the century.

THE programme of the Russian-Jewish Socialists declare that the Russian system of Government cannot be reformed, and must therefore be destroyed.

THE general reports of the crops in France are highly satisfactory for quantity. In some cases the probable yield of wheat is considered deficient, but barley promises excellently.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S journeys between England and Scotland cost Her Majesty nearly £8,000 a year, two special cars are always run, the second conveying horses, carriages and servants.

HAVE we brought a new peril into our homes in the seemingly innocent telephone? A Hartford person undertook to speak through one in the interstices of a lively thunder-storm, and was summarily knocked down. Electricity did it.

SIXTEEN Waterloo officers are living. Among them is the Earl of Albemarle, whose agreeable recollections were published a few years ago. He was then an ensign and one of the survivors had, in 1815, as high a rank as captain.

A NEBRASKA Sunday-school was on a railroad excursion. A boy leaned out of a car window and fired a revolver at the same instant that a girl put her head out at another window, and the bullet killed her.

THE skull and horns of an uncommonly large mountain ram was found embedded in a pine tree in Idaho. It is supposed that the beast was caught and starved in the tree when it was a sapling, leaving his head to be overgrown by the wood.

A BOSTON paper mentions that ten years ago, Dr. M. G. Smith of Newburyport went without food for forty days, and during all that time visited his patients daily. Dr. Smith is still alive, and sincerely believes that healthy people can live on air.

A BROOKLYN man is so bow-legged that a dog which tries to run between his legs came out on the same side of the man that he started in on, and then when the man went to kick the animal he hit a man on the other side of him.

THE Sultan of Zanzibar, weary of the mere work of reigning Prince, has become a business man. He has bought a British steamship, and is running it at cheap rates for passengers and cargo between Zanzibar and Bombay.

HERE is retribution: "John Jackson, a Savannah negro, burst a blood vessel while stealing a heifer, and was found in a pasture with the rope tied around his waist and the heifer quietly grazing at the other end."

Two eggs of the Great Auk, declared to be genuine, and to have been discovered in an old private collection in Edinburgh, were sold by Mr. Stevens, auctioneer, King street, Covent Garden, in London, July 2. Each one was sold for about \$500.

THE weather all over Ireland up to the present time has been favourable, and it is expected that the potato crop will be enormous. It promises to exceed anything seen in Ireland since a period anterior to the famine of 1847. The root and cereal crops are also luxuriant.

## THE TIDY HOUSEWIFE.

The careful, tidy housewife, when she is giving her house its spring cleaning, should bear in mind that the dear inmates of her house are more precious than houses, and that their systems need cleansing by purifying the blood, regulating the stomach and bowels to prevent and cure the diseases from spring malaria and miasma, and she should know that their is nothing that will do it so perfectly and surely as Hop Bitters, the purest and best of all medicines. See other column.