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# MEN OF THE DAY

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MEN OF THE DAY



LOUIS FRÉCHETTE.

## LOUIS FRÉCHETTE

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In a large compartment, on the fourth or highest flat but one of a fine residence in Sherbrooke street, bearing number 408, may be found, at almost any hour of the day, our poet laureate, the subject of this sketch. A window running nearly the whole length of one side of this compartment cheerfully lights up the interior; the other three sides of the vast room are taken up with book-cases filled with priceless volumes and surmounted by family busts alternating with numerous diplomas much prized by the owner of this sanctum whom we behold yonder seated at his desk in the midst of his labours, correcting and re-correcting for the tenth time, it may be, those exquisite productions of his brain that ever show the ripeness and polish of the master.

But we must not suppose that the duties of the host are forgotten in the occupations of the poet.

On ascending the stairs to the landing which brings him to the door of this temple of the Muses, the visitor presses an electric button and is admitted to an inner chamber whose large half-glass portal, embellished in beautiful colours, shows the monogram of the proprietor.

In a deep niche to the left as you enter, is seen a gigantic ibis in Japanese bronze, supported by a figure of luminous tints, symbolic of the unruffled peace and hospitality that reigns within.

Balzac was of opinion that no man could enjoy perfect domestic freedom, who paid less than fifty thousand *livres* rental. I am unable to say if Fréchette has exceeded this limit, but you no sooner pass the threshold of the poet, than you are made to feel that here every fire-side ease and comfort is gratefully found.

A rich and elegant *portière*, slightly drawn aside, gives us a glimpse of the sumptuous drawing-room,—but, hist! we hear the

manly voice of our host who hails us from above: "Is that you, Sauvalle? Come up: you know the road." All ceremony is conspicuous for its absence under this genial roof-tree. For prosperity has never turned the head of our author: he is ever the same, the boon companion of all, ever ready to soothe and serve.

I make my way slowly up to the second flat where my radiant host greets me with a hearty shake of the hand that bespeaks the warmth of his heart. "How are you, old fellow? All well at home?" He never forgets to put the last interrogatory, showing that he is a "home-man" in the truest sense of the word.

Children are his delight, as may be seen by glancing at a portrait which holds the place of honour over his bureau, representing the genius which produced the "Art of being a Grandfather."

The vulgar imagine that a poet, when acting under the inspiration of the muse, dons some odd garment, wears his hair in a particular fashion, or strikes unusual attitudes. What nonsense! Our author met me at the door of his sanctuary with an affable smile—no superabundance of leonine locks—dressed like the ordinary run of mortals, his feet incased in a pair of good, stout boots, as the best preventive of chills and gout.

"Now, dear friend," said he, "make yourself at home." I passed into the precincts of the well-known studio and, taking a cigar from the table which I lighted, threw myself into an easy chair and at once began to cudgel my brains how best to broach the subject of my visit. Something in my manner must have disclosed to the quick eye of the poet that my mind was preoccupied. "Do you know why I am here, friend Fréchette?" I said; "you would never guess."—"Well, I am far from being a wizzard," replied he; "and I have less faith in such a personage, since that last witch-craft story I wrote for the *Presse*. So you will please enlighten me forthwith."—"In that case, I may as well tell you that I have come to take your portrait."—"Why! you are not a photographer?"

"It is not that exactly. I have been asked to furnish MEN OF THE DAY with your monography, or, better still, with your biography."

"Phew!"

"I merely propose to give a slight sketch of your life. Will you assist me?"

"You ask me to do something that is not in my line."

"I know it, but you will not prevent me from limning your general characteristics. With this laudable object in view, you must allow me to coax you to speak a little, whilst I undertake to do the bulk of the talking, with free access to every part of the house from garret to cellar as becometh a veritable curio hunter or Paul Pry."

"But what interest would this have for the outside world?"

"A great deal. You must have read de Goncourt and his *Home of an Artist*. He is his own reviewer. Listen to what he says: 'If the writers of modern times find much to interest them in the lives and actions of the ancients, they cannot be blind to the importance of contemporaneous history.'"

"All right, I am convinced, but unwillingly convinced, mind you!"

"Of course—but now to begin." Our author at once sets to work, and his pen, rapidly running over the paper, covers leaf after leaf. Methodical in all things, his writing materials—pens, ink and paper, are neat, choice, and tasty. The waste of paper does not annoy him half so much as slovenly habits. He is ever orderly in all he does; every document has its special envelope, carefully put away in its allotted place, numbered, and docketed. He thus knows exactly where to put his hand on what he wants, no matter how old it may be.

His scrap books are a precious collection of the anecdotal history of Canada with numberless underlines and annotations. He is always adding to the general store of his information and is never at a loss to supplement his ideas with references and authorities drawn from the thesaurus of his memory or the works that adorn the shelves of his library.

But in his busiest moments, he finds time to entertain those about him. Ever and anon he betrays his pleasure at the happy termination of a phrase or couplet, in sudden exclamations of joy. At such times, it may be, he jumps to his feet, adjusts his glasses and addresses his company, if they happen to be intimate friends, with all the gaiety and playfulness of a boy in his teens.

"Let us take a little rest now, whilst we imbibe some liquid refreshments. Then I'll read what I have just finished. I think you'll find it has the proper ring." Of course the invitation is

accepts, we touch glasses and once more resume our places.

As a reader and elocutionist, our author has few equals, and what is rare, he not only declaims to perfection his own poems, but those of others.

Yet, it is not for the mere gratification of the listener that our poet indulges thus his taste for elocution. It troubles him little whether his auditor approves or disapproves. He never stoops to the "tricks of the trade" to win applause. His chief object is to gauge the effect of his prose or verse on others. Closely scanning the countenances of his audience, he is enabled to read their feelings. If they smile at the humorous passages—grow sad at the serious ones and melt in tears when pity and sympathy are evoked, he accepts these varied emotions as the criterion of success. But should a particular passage be received coldly, it is sure to be recast at the first opportunity.

Matter of fact, people are inclined to regard literary men as confirmed idlers or to picture them seated in their "dens," surrounded by piles of books and busy as beavers from early dawn until eve. All such preconceived notions, however, are erroneous in many cases and are so, certainly, in the present instance. The worthy subject of our sketch steers a middle course between both extremes, and is seen to accomplish a great deal of work, without, however, becoming a slave to the druggery of his calling. He has always some lighter composition on hand to which he can turn, by way of relaxation, from his heavier and more laboured productions which are known to advance by slow stages.

To-day he will dash off a comic article; to-morrow, a serious one, a couple pages of a memoir or an elegant translation. Then again, he will indulge in the most flowery imagery, only to pass rapidly from the sweetly sentimental to the most daring heights of the sublime in poesy. I do not speak here of his duties as a legislative councillor,—duties which he regards more in the light of an agreeable diversion than as an occupation. If questioned on this point, he might, with perfect sincerity, answer as Rubens once did under analogous circumstances. Rubens, it is known, was, for some time, Spanish ambassador to England. The Austrian ambassador, having paid him a friendly visit in his private quarters and seeing around the department all the paraphernalia of a painter—



cases, brushes, colours, canvas, etc., etc.,--exclaimed in pompous tones: "I notice, Sir, that, although a diplomatist, your spare moments are given to the arts."

"Pardon me," warmly rejoined Rubens; "I am an artist, my spare moments are given to diplomacy."

Thus Fréchette is not a man of office whose leisure is dedicated to literature; but he is a man of letters, who seeks relaxation in affairs of state. In this connection, I may observe that he is about to abandon a post that engrosses too much of his time.

Our poet's diction is always polished and classic,—so much so, as to sound to the honourable ears of some honourable councillors, as the essence of ultra refinement. And yet, no one is less of a purist as far as the French language is concerned than he, less subservient to its rules, less given to straining after effect. On the contrary, he is the boldest champion of "new departures" in the field of phraseology, so long as these "departures" add to the vigour and beauty of expression.

Thoroughly versed in the idiomatic charms of the mother tongue, he has done more than any other man in America to embellish it, to conserve and perpetuate in its entirety the noble speech of a Bossuet and a Fénelon. For fifteen years and over he has worked incessantly to purify the French language, to lop off the dead branches of solecisms, barbarisms, and Anglicanisms, and to-day he has every reason to be proud of the good fruits that the judicious labours of his pruning knife have brought forth.

With him, too, it is second nature to make war on ignorance. But he is as indulgent to inherent or unassuming ignorance as he is merciless towards literary pedants and charlatans, the jackdaws of the world of letters, who strut about in borrowed plumage to the disgust of the well-informed.

In the field of history and philosophy, he is conservative; as regards the domain of *belles-lettres*, he is a free lance, and, though far from partial to yellow-covered literature, he brooks no restraint in such reading.

He reads everything that comes in his way, to the discomfiture of certain prudes who, in the fashion of all hypocrites, make a triple sign of the cross on beholding this or that banned volume in his bookcases.

Sainte-Beuve tells us that Villemain, while yet young, read for Sieyès his eulogy of Montaigne. Having come to the passage where he says : " But in reading Rousseau, I dreaded to dwell on human weaknesses that should be repelled," Sieyès stopped him, exclaiming : " Not at all ! the closer we scan those weaknesses, the better shall we analyse them."

This is the enlightened tolerance practised by our poet and that he concedes to others. And yet, never has he written a line calculated to offend the religious susceptibilities of protestant or catholic. As regards the moral tone of his writings, the youngest children may peruse them with profit and safety as they would their catechism.

In defining the talents of a writer, it is necessary to advert to his appearance and physical temperament. This fact is no longer disputed. It is acknowledged that a man thinks as he feels and writes as he thinks. This is the case with our author. He is first, last and every time a patriot—and one of robust strength—hence, the manly ring about his verses, the trumpet notes, the brilliant apotheosis of his *Légende d'un peuple*. Yet, is he sensitive and sympathetic—in his relations with the weak and lowly, tender as a woman. A word of endearment moistens the eye of one more disposed to mirth than tears. His sadness is as contagious as his gaiety; his hand and his heart are ever open and ready at the call of humanity; whilst his motto : " Excelsior ! Excelsior !" finds a fitting echo in the pathos and delicacy of the sentiments embalmed in his *Fueilles volantes*.

In his prose works are to be found the most salient features of our laureate—his force of character, good nature and jovial disposition. Have you ever read his *Originaux et détraqués*, where a rich vein of the mock-heroic incites to roars of laughter in every line? Or his *Jupiter Vallerand*, carrying off the *torquette du diable*, in an assemblage of religious worthies? Nothing could be more striking or realistic. The style, dash, and construction of the phrases show that the author enters heart and soul into the spirit of the scenes depicted. His more privileged friends who have access to his ever-increasing manuscripts alone know what a rich treat is in store for the Canadian public in his two volumes, *Masques et fantômes*, *Vieux cartons* in two volumes and the poems entitled *La forêt vierge*.

And yet, who is prepared to say that our laureate has exhausted the rich mines of his imagination? Few will think so who have perused his last story, *Le conte de Noël*, which lately appeared in the columns of the *Revue Canadienne*. In my opinion, this novel entitles him to rank with our best writers of fiction. His talents appear in this new rôle at their best. In any case, I venture to predict that *Le conte de Noël* will be found on every table and survive as a work unique of its kind.

Up to the present, I have alluded to our author's latest productions only. His others are familiar as "household words," such as, his *Voix de l'exilé*, *Pêle-mêle*, *Fleurs boréales*, *Oiseaux des neiges*, which are only a few of his many classic effusions.

The French Academy has crowned two of his compositions—a red letter day for the author himself and Canada at large. The honour was all the greater as it was won by one who had sprung from the ranks of the people—a self-made man who had to surmount the most discouraging and countless obstacles before reaching this, the proudest goal of his ambition. For his was not a muse nursed in the lap of luxurious ease, but exposed to every hardship and misgiving known only to those whose life is a constant struggle with adverse fate.

But now that he has successfully weathered the storm, he can serenely look forward to the future, his cruel experiences in the past predisposing him to lend a helping hand to unknown but deserving aspirants to literary fame. Nor will he harken to expressions of gratitude for favours thus conferred. He thinks as Diderot did when he exclaimed under similar circumstances: "They do not rob me of my life,—I am glad to sacrifice a portion of it, if such sacrifice can benefit others."

And yet there are croakers who find fault with our author because of these traits of character at once generous and Christian, forgetting that it was Jean-Jacques who wrote:

"Des sentiments si légitimes  
Seront-ils toujours combattus?  
Nous les mettons au rang des crimes:  
Ils devraient être des vertus."

But as time keeps ever on the move and my visit has proved a protracted one, I prepare to take my departure. But I am unexpect-

edly compelled to relinquish my purpose by Madam Fréchette who, overhearing my voice in her husband's sanctum, suddenly appears before us with a pressing invitation to remain for dinner.

What a happy couple—my host and hostess! This distinguished and amiable woman gladly renounced her name, one of the best known in Montreal society, to link her fortunes with that of our laureate who, on his part, was destined to achieve for her another name as illustrious as any in the literary annals of America. Three pledges of conjugal love bless this happy union. Louis, the oldest son, is reserved but refined in manners; his sister Jeanne, well developed for her years, with large, beaming eyes and graceful carriage. After these come the two youngest: Louise, frail and delicate, and for this reason, no doubt, her papa's pet and darling; and last but not least, the baby, a charming infant three years old, fair and curly, whose joyous prattle is sweet to hear, as to and fro it flits like sunshine in a bed of flowers!

How rapturously the father's gaze rests upon the cherished group—the loving wife and tender mother, smiling benignly on her little ones—sweet scented buds of future promise about to blossom!

"This is true happiness, Sauvalle, and only this," exclaimed my enchanted host, as he directed my attention by a glance to the group I have just described.

In surveying this bright scene of domestic felicity, the natural protector of this home and its occupants, who has stored up enough of this world's goods to secure the latter a future of ease and comfort, may well exclaim with feelings of grateful pride: "My beloved ones, at least, will not have to endure what their father suffered, nor for them will the boast of François Villon be an empty boast:

*"' Vente, gresle, gelle, j'ay mon pain cuit!'"*

In speaking of our laureate, L. O. David once observed: "Fréchette has a dual character: he is an ardent poet and staid man of business."

We have already dealt with him in his capacity of poet, let us look at him now as a financier.

And here, we must remark that he is the first whose pen in Canada was adequately compensated. If our writers are now able to gain a respectable livelihood, they may thank our laureate, who

succeeded in levelling the barriers that formerly impeded the progress of our men of letters.

The average returns from his labours, added to other means in hand, net him a goodly income which he skilfully fosters and multiplies by the exercise of qualities not usually inherent in devotees of the muse—tact, diligence, and method.

Some may find fault with me for dwelling on this uninviting phase of our poet's individuality. But they are wrong. I consider it a phase worth studying and analysing.

Besides, I desire to present the bright side of our author's life. I take as much pleasure in contemplating the domestic happiness of a friend as my own; and certainly, no one more richly deserves to enjoy such happiness than the worthy subject of this sketch. He traced out for himself a line of conduct in starting out in life, and in all his struggles and adversities he was never known to swerve from the path of duty or commit a mean act. He was a paladin in the true sense of the word, and most worthily won his spurs.

Although simple and retiring in his habits, he sometimes indulges in the frivolities of the hour; but he keeps himself well in hand and never forgets his tastes as an artist; for, though every artist is not a poet, every poet is an artist; and Fréchette is essentially an artist.

How fiercely he defended the true canons of architectural and decorative art against the onslaughts of his compatriots! In his eyes it was not a war that he carried on, but a holy crusade against the cohorts of vandalism. He achieved a lasting triumph—one that will be acclaimed by posterity as its costliest heritage.

I must frankly admit that, in all my years of experience as a journalist, our author is the only writer who can claim to have uprooted, with his unaided pen, a long-standing abuse. The term abuse should be used here in the plural sense, for he has remedied more than one.

It was owing to his persistent efforts that have forever disappeared those unsightly wooden fences that were wont to disfigure our private grounds. It was he, too, who, despite the stout resistance of the *abbé* Baillargé, caused the pictures of mangled saints and martyrs, that erstwhile garnished our drawing-rooms, to be relegated to the more congenial atmosphere of the oratory. Another abuse which he successfully combated was the promiscuous use of the word "esquire," at one time claimed as a right by all sorts of people.

Lawyers, doctors, notaries, aldermen—all are now pleased to be called Mr. So and So, like the president of the French Republic.

These are a few of the reforms which our poet has effected, any one of which were sufficient to confer distinction on a journalist.

But let us get back to our legitimate story from this digression, since, after all, the removal of abuses, such as described, is not conclusive proof of our predicate—that our author is not only a poet, but an artist by instinct and education.

Some years ago, Fréchette was in the habit of dropping round to the studio of Philippe Hébert, our distinguished sculptor. So apposite were the poet's remarks on the art of sculpture, that the owner of the studio said to him one day : " Mr. Fréchette, why do you not try your hand at designing ? I would be delighted. You have everything at your hand for the purpose — stool, clay, and tools. Just try ! " The poet immediately tried his prentice hand on a bust of one of his own children (three years old) who happened to be present on the occasion. The resemblance was so striking that even now it faithfully represents the original, although sixteen years have elapsed since the design was executed. He followed up this essay by others. Two of the handsomest ornaments to be seen in his parlors to-day is a marble bust of his father and another of his father-in-law, the late J. B. Beaudry—both his own work and design.

Unfortunately he has not done anything in this line for years. Paintings are now his pet hobby. By long and untiring efforts, he has brought together one of the most valued collections of these, in which he takes much pride. One of the most striking objects in his lovely drawing-rooms, rich in odd and rare curios, is a picture by Jordain, the " Holy Family," probably the only work in America of this rival of Rubens. Here also we find another picture, *Hercules*, reputed to be from the hand of Parmesan; a bevy of children by Boucher; a Benjamin Costant, a Bellanger, a Forster, a Cox, a Fernand Lutcher, a Kreighoff, a Van Borcelan, with specimens of Edson, Huot, and Dyonnet.

Other novelties challenge our admiration in the dining-room—a large-sized Guillaume Heda, *The Autumn*, *The Daughters of Loth*, by Guerchin; a couple of gems by Félix, two by Gaston Rouillet, one by Yeen King, interspersed with rural sketches, and a charming sea-view by Reeves.

It is quite possible that I may have passed over in silence some of the best specimens in the poet's collection, for the whole house has the appearance of an art gallery.

One of the dominant traits in our author's character is his love of France—a feeling that almost amounts to a passion, void, however, of fanaticism. Although a loyal British subject, this devotion to the land of his sires never sleeps; he is ever ready to render her, gratuitously, the services of an ambassador. In his parlours souvenirs of France everywhere abound;—in his bedrooms even we see them scattered about on the furniture or adorning the walls.

His home is the resort of the most eminent writers from abroad, his hospitality being especially warm when the visitors hail from the shores of France, as may be vouched for by Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin, Rhéa, and others.

He is a chevalier of the Legion of Honour; an officer of the Academy of Rouen, the second most distinguished in France; a member of the French Literary Club; a decorated member of the *Association des Félibres*; the patron of three literary societies established in America—one in Chicago, one in Minneapolis, and one in Montreal. He has besides received the honour of L.L.D. and L.L.B. from three universities; is a member of the Royal Society of the London (Eng.) Imperial Institute, and wears the laurel of the French Academy. And yet, with all his blushing honours thick upon him, he is as modest and retiring as he was at the age of fifteen, when, to escape from the ill-humour of an ill-natured step-mother who had small sympathy for the muse or her devotees, he ran away from home to break stones on the streets of Ogdensburg. Yes, our laureate has had his full share of the miseries and troubles of life. But his misfortunes have never been able to sour his temper. He is ever ready for a joke or a laugh—and his laugh is so hearty and sincere as to be infectious—nothing is proof against it—neither the living—and, I was going to add: nor the dead.

With these genial qualities, we are not surprised that he is such a favorite at social gatherings, and that once he makes his appearance in the drawing-rooms he is sure to be the centre of an ever-increasing and admiring group of wit and beauty. His manner and speech fascinate all who come within reach of their magic influence.

I will relate an instance.

I believe it was in the year 1887 that the *Trappeur* and *Canadien* snowshoe clubs organized a joint excursion, on a grand scale, to Holyoke and Springfield, in the State of Massachusetts. Several guests were invited, amongst them our poet and L. O. David. Before reaching Springfield, a terrible snow storm came on, completely blocking up the line. We concluded to return to Montreal.

Snugly seated in our Pullman stateroom, which we took care to reserve, we made the best we could of a bad job. Our company was very small; our poet, L. O. David, and Ernest Roy, surgeon-major of the 65th. At Holyoke we were joined by our welcome friend, Cléophas LeDuc, who was doubly welcome on this occasion, as he had with him a well-filled hamper—it was the manna falling from heaven. The storm continued to grow worse without, but we succeeded in making ourselves quite comfortable within. We kept up a running fire of small talk. At last there was a pause in the conversation, but of short duration, as our laureate immediately “took the floor,” figuratively speaking. It was about eight o'clock in the evening and the conductor had just announced that we were stuck in a snow bank, with the prospect of speedy deliverance.

“Where are we, conductor?” was asked.

“At Vernon, in Vermont.”

“How long will it take us to reach Montreal?”

“Four or five hours.”

“All right.”

LeDuc at once opened his basket of good things and our author his stores of funny tales. The feasting and roars of laughter that followed made the car windows gingle again. I never heard so many grotesque stories of a side-splitting nature. The fun waxed hotter and hotter, only interrupted, at intervals, for refreshments—the uproarious jolity deepened and the wit sparkled and effervesced as never before. Train, excursion, storm—all was forgotten in the mad revelry for the moment. At last a knock came to the door—it was the same conductor:—

“Gentlemen, if you like you can leave . . . .”

“What, are we in Montreal?”

“Certainly not; but breakfast is ready.”

“What! breakfast! What time is it?”

“Eight o'clock in the morning.”



"Where are we any way?"

"At Vernon, gentlemen, in the State of Vermont."

Were ever men so thunder-struck! The whole night slipped away in the merriment created by our poet, and we thought we were only a couple of hours together!

But our laureate does not wholly reserve his talents as a story teller for his friends: he uses them to some purpose outside of Canada, by dissipating the mists of doubt and misconception that obscure the early history of the first French-Canadian colonists who settled in this country—mists that still befog the minds of Frenchmen in the Old Land.

"It is highly gratifying," he remarked to me lately; "to see what a deep interest educated people take in our national affairs. Five years ago," he continued, "I was the guest of Mgr. Thomas, the eminent archbishop of Rouen, since raised to the cardinalate. One day he entertained a large company of distinguished clergymen and requested me to recite some of my historic poems. I did so. I then ventured to declaim the *Excommuniés*, where, as you know, I described the death of the last rebels under English domination who were banned by Mgr. Briand and buried in unconsecrated ground. I had serious misgivings as to how my theme would be received by the present company; but I was soon reassured by the deep impression it evidently made on the worthy prelate. At last when I had read the concluding couplet:

"Sans demander à Dieu si j'ai tort en cela,  
Je découvre mon front devant ces tombes-là."

"I had the inexpressible satisfaction to overhear Mgr. Thomas say aloud to the reverend gentlemen near him: 'I have no reason to doubt but that those brave people were saved. Exalted patriotism like theirs must commend itself to Heaven.'"

Our author also tried his hand at the game of politics, but has no reason to recall his efforts in this direction with pleasure. For five years he represented Lévis at Ottawa, but retired long since despite the protestations of his constituents. A man like our author, whose philosophy teaches him to always champion the right, is sadly handicapped in the arena of Canadian politics to-day.

I must now make my bow, kind reader, and leave you, happy

to have depicted some of my friend's excellent qualities. If you doubt the truthfulness of my picture, you can see the original for yourself—you will be made thrice welcome.

MARC SAUVALLE.

Montreal, February, 1893.

(Translated by W. O. Farmer, B.C.L.)



Ottawa, 2 juin 90

Cher Monsieur Tachi,

J'écris avec le plus grand plaisir la biographie de M. Laurier. Je vous félicite. Votre entreprise est belle, et je lui souhaite le plus grand succès.

Très cordialement à vous,

Spécialiste

MEN OF THE DAY



JOHN GEORGE BOURINOT.

## JOHN GEORGE BOURINOT

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To the statesmanship, letters, scientific achievement, artistic and educational progress of the Dominion of Canada, the little Province of Nova Scotia has made important contributions. She has furnished the Dominion with a Prime Minister, a High Commissioner in London, a Chief Justice of the highest Court in the country, the Principals in two of our greatest Universities, Geologists whose fame extends the world over, eminent journalists, poets, historians, and writers of fiction. She has furnished us also with the highest constitutional authority on the practice and procedure of Parliamentary Government in Canada,—a work quoted and accepted in every colony belonging to the British Empire, where representative institutions prevail, a work which, in seven years, passed through two large editions, and has won for its author, among statesmen and parliamentarians, a reputation equal in character to that of May. What the great writers on the British constitution, its growth and development, have done for England, the subject of this sketch, has accomplished for Canada and the sister colonies. We have said that the Nova-Scotians have taken unto themselves the foremost positions in the Dominion to-day, in all departments of human activity in which the intellect plays the most conspicuous part. They have gravitated to Ottawa, year by year, and dropped into public berths, which no one can refuse to say they did not earn, by virtue of a talent and ability, which seem inherent in the race from which they sprung. Thus we find the Library of Parliament in charge of a son of New-Scotland, the chief of the Statistical Branch is another, the Judge of the Exchequer Court is a third, while Deputy Ministerships, chief officers in the Commons and in the Senate, to say nothing of clerks of the first and second classes, claim as their birth-place that little province by the sea, whose area, all told, is less than 21,000 square

miles. Why this should be so must be left to the ethnologists to explain. The fact remains, nevertheless.

Our present purpose is to sketch, as briefly as the limited space in this work permits, the career of John George Bourinot, the Clerk of the House of Commons, publicist, journalist, and *littérateur*. He was born at Sydney, in the island of Cape Breton, on the 24th of October, 1837. His father, the late Hon. Lieut.-Col. John Bourinot, was a resident of Sydney for half a century. He was vice-consul for France, and those who have ever visited him at his home will remember the liberal and open-handed way in which he dispensed the hospitalities of his position. From 1859 until the union of the provinces, he represented Cape Breton in the House of Assembly at Halifax. At Confederation, he was, by Royal proclamation, called to the Senate of Canada. Senator Bourinot was of Norman descent, a Huguenot, and a native of the island of Jersey. He married Jane, daughter of the Hon. Mr. Justice Marshall, who was a fearless advocate of temperance, an able writer on social and religious topics, a sound jurist, and a gentleman much respected by the community in which he lived. His father, a captain in the British army, was an Irishman of strong, loyal, and patriotic feelings. From such an ancestry is the subject of these remarks descended. With such blood flowing in his veins, is not to be wondered at that he succeeded in reaching his present position of distinction, despite the many obstacles which, from time to time, appeared in his path. His early training was carefully looked after, his father having had the good fortune to secure as a tutor the Rev. W. Y. Porter, under whom the intelligent lad made rapid progress. Mr. Porter was a capital teacher, with an especial liking for his profession. He saw promise in his bright pupil and took the utmost pains to bring him forward. He was not deceived in his prediction. The lad amazed him by his quickness of perception and the intellectual grasp which he exhibited,—a faculty quite beyond his years. His father resolved to complete the education so well begun and sent him to Toronto, where he entered the University of Trinity College. His college days are not forgotten by his fellow students. He had a passion for study and applied himself to his books with a devotion, perseverance, and zeal, which proved the admiration of students and professors alike. The plums of the course dropped into his hands. The Wellington and other scholarships were among

these. On leaving his *Alma Mater*, he found it no easy task to decide upon the calling which he should pursue in life. The law offered its advantages, but the literary instinct in young Bourinot was so strong that he made up his mind to gratify his aspirations and cultivate letters. The newspaper press, at first, afforded him the opportunity he desired. He began as a parliamentary reporter and editor. In those days Joseph Howe and Charles Tupper were in their prime, and it was Bourinot's task to set down in short-hand the speeches they made in the old House of Assembly at Halifax. The acquaintance he made with those statesmen at that time ripened into a friendship which remained steadfast to this day, in the case of Tupper, and to the date of Howe's death. The utterances of those men largely influenced the future of the young journalist, and even in later life, he has often been heard to say that, when he wanted inspiration, he had only to turn to the collected addresses of Howe to receive it. In 1860, Bourinot founded and edited the *Halifax Reporter*, a newspaper which enjoyed a fine reputation among its *clientèle* for the brilliancy and independence of its editorials, and the faithfulness of its parliamentary reports. In 1861, the editor of the *Reporter* added to his duties the work of reporting the proceedings of the Nova-Scotia House of Assembly, having accepted the post of chief of the staff. This position he held until Confederation, when he was appointed short-hand writer to the Senate, and removed to Ottawa, where he took up his residence. He wrote letters to the Halifax, and St-John, N.B., papers, and contributed a series of valuable articles, chiefly historical, to *Stewart's Literary Quarterly Magazine* of the last named city. He also wrote some short stories for the *Quarterly*, which attracted wide attention and led to a demand for their publication in book form. This their author, however, has not yet done, though some of his papers, written between 1867 and 1872, have been enlarged and re-printed in another shape, notably his account of the island of Cape Breton, which became in 1892 a monograph of formidable dimensions, and the most exhaustive and able history of a deeply interesting portion of Nova-Scotia ever written. The paper, read before the English Literature Section of the Royal Society of Canada, is included in the volume of transactions and proceedings of that learned body; but, for the benefit of those who do not get the transactions, a special edition of the treatise has been published, with



all the original maps, plans, and notes. This sumptuous book is affectionately inscribed to the memory of the author's father. It was undertaken as a labour of love and is so well done that no one can make the attempt to touch the subject again without quoting from it at almost every page. Another historical paper by Bourinot, originally printed in *The Canadian Monthly and National Review*, of Toronto, described "The Old Forts of Acadia." This monograph, extended and revised, became a feature later on, in the transactions of the Royal Society, where it may be consulted under the title of "Some Old Forts by the Sea." A brief account of Louisbourg as it appeared in 1870 is appended.

Mr. Bourinot held the office of short-hand writer to the Senate until 1873, when he went down to the Lower House to take the post of second assistant clerk of the House of Commons. He held the place for six years, when he was promoted to the first clerk assistantship. On the 18th of December, 1880, on the superannuation of the late Alfred Patrick, Esq., C.M.G., Mr. Bourinot became the chief clerk of the House, which position he still holds.

Notwithstanding the nature of his arduous duties as a public official, Mr. Bourinot kept up his literary work, unceasingly, contributing regularly to the leading newspapers and periodicals and furnishing for the various learned societies and universities, in this country and abroad, many important papers on a great variety of subjects. In the early days of the *Toronto Mail* and when the *New-York World* appealed to a higher class of readers than it does at present, Mr. Bourinot's prolific pen was brought into frequent request. His style, clear and convincing, gave a value and an importance to anything that he had to say. The *Canadian Monthly* early ranked him as one of its foremost contributors, and that was a time, too, when Goldwin Smith, W. A. Foster, and Wm. T. Rattray were sending out to the reading people of Canada their best work. Bourinot published in the *Monthly* his elaborate series of papers on the intellectual development of the Canadian people, reviewing in an incisive way the social and political changes connected with our mental development and progress, the educational system of the country, from the French *régime* to our own day, with a plea for a national university, journalism in Canada, and those who have made it what it is, and closing with a glance at our native literature. The

author, yielding to the wish of many to have the articles in a more permanent form, issued the papers in a volume of 128 pages in 1881.

The pages of the Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, of which association Mr. Bourinot was, for many years, the Honorary Corresponding Secretary in Ottawa, have often been occupied by our author with papers of sterling value, relating to his favorite subject, the political, economical and industrial growth of the Dominion. Chief among these productions, we would mention the essays on the Maritime Industry and the National Development of Canada, treatises which the press of Great Britain found opportunity to praise without stint. The great magazines have never closed their pages to his pen. Of his article in *Blackwood* on the progress of the new Dominion, the *London Times*, in its review, remarked that "it was the best article that has yet appeared on the subject in a British periodical." The editor, Dr. Smith, of the staid old *Quarterly Review*, in accepting one of his papers, asked for more of the same. The *Westminster* welcomed him with open hands and the *Scottish Review*, published at Paisley and London, made room for his writings with a pleasure which the readers of that eminently respectable and readable quarterly shared to the fullest extent. In America, Mr. Bourinot sent most of his historical papers to the *Magazine of American History*, of New-York, which was edited by his friend, Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, whose death early in January, 1893, all friends of literature and historical study sadly deplore.

In 1882, in order to give impetus and direction to art, science, and literature in Canada, Lord Lorne, then Governor-General, founded two societies. The Academy of Arts immediately became successful. The Royal Society, which combines, perhaps, the best features of the French Academy, and the British and American associations, was not so well received at first, and in certain quarters it aroused some hostile criticism. The membership was, at the beginning, limited to eighty members. The first two sections, of twenty fellows each, concerned themselves with history, archæology, ethnology, and general literature. The first section is comprised of Frenchmen, and the second of Englishmen; the two remaining sections are devoted to science in all its branches, nearly every department being represented. The latter, it may be said at once, make by far the better exhibit, but the literary sections show yearly signs of great vitality.

This is especially noticeable in the French section, which admits into its part of the transactions and proceedings, poetry, stories, dramas, and fragments of comedies, though, of course, more solid papers on philology, history, and archæology are not excluded. The English are more conservative, and though poems are sometimes read at the meetings, they are rigorously left out by the committee of editors from the pages of the published volumes. In establishing the Royal Society, Lord Lorne consulted Mr. Bourinot very frequently, appointed him the first honorary secretary of the body, and if the Society today has become an institution of value and importance in the country, much of that value and importance are due to the untiring energy and zeal which the honorary secretary devoted to the enterprise. He not only prepared all of the reports, and attended to the enormous correspondence which fell upon his shoulders, but he practically conducted the Society through all its devious paths, until it felt strong and self-reliant enough to walk alone. To the annual volumes of transactions he contributed many important papers. He looked after all the details, and every new President who came to preside over the deliberations of the Society was beholden to Mr. Bourinot for the smooth and easy manner in which the proceedings were carried on, his large parliamentary experience helping him materially in securing this result. From the formation of the Society until May, 1891, he remained honorary secretary, when, by unanimous vote, he was chosen Vice-President. In May, 1892, on motion of the late Sir Daniel Wilson, and Sir James A. Grant, K.C.M.G., he was elected President of the Society. This election was also unanimous.

One of the most useful series of works ever published,—for the range is wide and the subjects treated are of the highest political and historical importance,—is the collection of papers which forms the John Hopkin's University Studies, Baltimore, Maryland. In this series, Dr. Bourinot's carefully elaborated papers on "Federal Government in Canada" and "Local Government in Canada" appear. They created marked attention and drew to our system of parliamentary government many students, who had before but an imperfect knowledge of Canadian institutions, and the manner in which they were worked out. The John Hopkin's University Studies are greatly prized, and the authors, being men of eminence in their especial departments of thought, are always sure of reaching a constituency

of readers which embraces many of the ripest scholars in the world. It is satisfactory for Canadians to know that Dr. Bourinot's contributions to the collection are among the principal ones published by the University and that their value has been proved.

The American Historical Association was founded a few years ago in the United States by leading historians and students of history. George Bancroft was the first president. A few Canadian men of letters were elected members, but it was not long before the distinguished services which Dr. Bourinot has rendered this continent were recognized, and he was made a member of the Council of this august body. The society meets once a year in Washington, in the month of December, and at these meetings papers are read and discussed. Dr. Bourinot presented at one of the sessions his valuable monograph on Parliamentary Government in Canada, which was published and circulated by the Association. This work proved to be one of the most interesting and valuable of the number read during the year. It was particularly timely and instructive, and much interest was taken in it from the fact that comparisons were drawn between Parliamentary and Congressional Government, the two systems being clearly outlined. The bibliographical notes on constitutional literature have added also to Dr. Bourinot's standing as a well-read authority on the subjects which he treats with such signal success. The American Historical Association's Papers are now circulated by the Government of the United States, and this gives the association the character to all intents and purposes of a government institution. Dr. Bourinot, it may be stated here, is a fellow of the Statistical Society of Great-Britain, as well as a member of the Council of the American Academy of Political Science. He is also one of the advisory council of the World's Congress Auxiliary on a Congress of Historians and Historical Students, his associates from Canada being Dr. Douglas Brynner, F.R.S.C., of Ottawa, and Dr. George Stewart, F.R.G.S., of Quebec.

Important papers on Canadian parliamentary institutions have been read at intervals by Dr. Bourinot before such bodies as the Geographical Society of Quebec, Harvard University of Cambridge, Mass., McGill University of Montreal, the University of Trinity College, Toronto, and the National Club of Toronto. It was before the National Club that he read his "Responsible Government in

Canada." The lectures he delivered before the students and friends of Trinity College were afterwards incorporated in papers presented to the Royal Society. As a lecturer and speaker, Dr. Bourinot is clear and distinct, making no pretensions to oratorical display and employing few gestures. His phrases are always well chosen, and his manner of presenting his argument is forcible and convincing. He is so sure of his ground that he cannot brook contradiction. Contradiction, however, he has occasionally encountered, but in the end it has usually been his antagonist who has been forced to retire discomfited from the field.

Dr. Bourinot's great work, unquestionably great in every sense of the word, and the one by which he has been made known in every part of Her Majesty's Dominions where constitutional government holds sway, is his *Practice and Procedure of Parliament*, with a review of the origin and growth of Parliamentary institutions in the Dominion of Canada. In this masterly exposition, he has drawn on his experiences of more than two decades and a half spent in the observation of Parliament in action, both in Nova-Scotia and in the Dominion of Canada. The wealth of material gathered during that time and in this way was carefully collated and made ready for use when the time came for its employment. A work of the sort was urgently needed, for Dr. Alpheus Todd's two books, the one on *Parliamentary Government in the Colonies*, did not quite fill the field that Dr. Bourinot had resolved to occupy. There was room for both authorities, and when it was announced that Dr. Bourinot had undertaken to write the volume which bears his name, no man was freer with his advice, no man wished the project greater success, no man urged with more vehemence the new comer on the scene, to acquit himself of his self-appointed task, than the kindly student whose life-work had been so freely placed at the disposal of the parliamentarians of his adopted country for two generations. Dr. Bourinot's object in giving Canada his work, was to place on view, and in plain language so that all might readily understand them, the rules and principles which govern the practice and procedure of Parliament. These, as we know, were derived, originally, from the usages and orders of the Imperial Parliament. But, as our author points out, "in the course of years, divergencies of practice have arisen and a great many precedents have been made, which seemed to call for such

work" as his. Accordingly he undertook to explain the rules and usages followed in Canada, as well as to supply "such copious references to the best authorities, and particularly to the works of Hatsell and May, as will enable the reader to compare Canadian with British procedure." An introductory chapter traces the origin and gradual development of Parliamentary institutions in the Dominion, from the French *régime* to the present time. Furthermore, the author has added a digest of the decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and of the Supreme Court of Canada, which bear upon the important question of the relative jurisdictions of the Parliament of the Dominion and the Legislatures of Provinces. In the second edition, a good deal more matter has been added, though the original plan and scope of the work have remained the same. The book at once took its place. It was not only a vast store-house of facts and precedents, but it was a delightfully written volume. Indeed, unlike similar ventures undertaken by less skillful pens, Bourinot's Practice and Procedure can be read with the pleasure and profit that one experiences from a perusal of Green or Froude, the author's style being, from the first page to the last, strong, luminous, and brilliant. The *London Times*, in a review which covered three of its broad columns, had only words of praise to say of it. The press of Australia, of Canada, and of the United States pronounced opinions equally favourable regarding its merit, and public men of the Empire, including Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, and others of great name in the domain of statecraft, spoke only in terms of eulogy of its value, its great importance, its clearness, and perfect accuracy. As we have said, the work immediately became the authority on the subject, in every dependency of the British Crown. At the request of many, Dr. Bourinot subsequently prepared a Manual of the Constitutional History of Canada, from the earliest period to the year 1888, it being made up of chapters of his greater work. This he dedicated, in felicitous terms, to the Marquis of Lansdowne, then Governor General of Canada. Another book of Dr. Bourinot is entitled "Canadian Studies in Comparative Politics," in three chapters, the first dealing with the English Character of Canadian Institutions, the second making a comparison between the Political Systems of Canada and the United States, and the third being devoted to the Federal Government in Switzerland compared with that in Canada. This

book, like the others, is fascinating in its style and rich in notes and allusions.

Dr. Bourinot has deservedly been made the recipient of many honours. The University of Queen's College, Kingston, conferred on him, in 1886, the honorary degree of LL.D.. Two years later, his *Alma Mater*, Trinity College, of Toronto, granted him the honorary degree of D.C.L., and in 1890, on the occasion of the centennial celebration of King's College, Windsor, Nova-Scotia, that ancient institution added to his laurels her much-prized degree of D.C.L.. The Queen, in recognition of his valuable public services, created him, in 1890, a Companion of the Order of St-Michael-and-St.George.

In private life Dr. Bourinot is one of the kindest and most genial of men. His beautiful home, in Ottawa, is the scene of many acts of unobtrusive hospitality. There surrounded by his books, he loves to meet his friends, to discuss the topics of the day and the latest volume of romance, history or poetry, on all of which, from the abundance of his reading and the clearness of his observation, he is always able to throw much light. An ardent Imperial Federationist, he was appointed, in May, 1885, at a public meeting in Montreal, a member of the Executive Committee, charged with the task of furthering and promoting that scheme of broader union with the Mother Country.

In October, 1865, Dr. Bourinot espoused Emily Alden Pilsbury, daughter of the American Consul at Halifax, a lady of rare beauty and accomplishments. To the grief of a large circle of friends, Mrs. Bourinot died in September, 1887. In July, 1889, Dr. Bourinot married Miss Isabelle Cameron, at Regina, N.W.T.. Her family always lived, until 1888, at Toronto. Her father, now dead, was a lumberman on Georgian Bay, well known and esteemed. Her grandfather, on her mother's side, was the late Rev. Canon Bleasdel, D.C.L., of Trenton, Ontario.

GEORGE STEWART.

Quebec, February, 1893.



It is with much pleasure  
that I learn the work  
of writing a sketch of my  
public life as journalist,  
literateur & official of  
the House of Commons, has  
been entrusted to my kind  
friend and co-worker in  
Letters, Dr. George  
Stewart of Quebec

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