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CANADIANA.

A COLLECTION OF CANADIAN NOTES.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

VOL. II.

FEBRUARY, 1890.

No. 2.

*THE LITERARY MOVEMENT IN CANADA UP
TO 1841.*

By MISS BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

Canada was forced by harsh, imperative necessity to carve out a literary career for herself. Separated entirely from France, deprived of any intellectual aliment which the Mother Country might have been able to offer, severed by differences of race, language and religion from her English conquerors, the only course open to her was to create a native literature, congenial to her own desires, sympathies and climatic influences.

During the French period, no national literature existed. The early settlers passed through careers full of action and stirring incidents as marvellous as tale of chivalry or legend of saints, and endured privation with audacity and hardihood. Men of noble birth and courtly nurture penetrated the secrecy of the wilderness, pierced forests, traced streams, planted their emblems and built forts. Existence was vivified by thrilling excitement, softened often by graces of the very highest breeding, consecrated in many instances by the devotion of a higher purpose. These people lived poetry and romance, but

had no time to write it. The slow work of civilization amidst the sombre forests of the New World, struggles with inhospitable nature, with the Indians, with hunger, misery and famine, left slight leisure for the cultivation of the intellectual faculties. The dangerous innovation of the printing press had not reached the colony. Education was controlled by the religious orders. The reading consisted mostly of formulas of devotion and lives of the saints. La Hontan complained that the priests prohibited and burned all but devotional books. In 1737, the Intendant Hocquart wrote—"All the education received by the sons of officers and gentlemen amounts to extremely little; they are barely able to read and write." In 1792, the Duc de Rochefoucauld observed that "the Canadian who could read was regarded as a phenomenon." "Notwithstanding their defective education," remarked the famous navigator Bourgainville, "the Canadians are naturally intelligent. They do not know how to write, but they speak with ease and with an accent as good as the Parisian."

Even at this period we are not without materials from which the story of our national existence is drawn. We have various diaries, histories and memoirs, but the contests of the day developed bitter antagonisms; prejudice and partizanship in many instances obscured truth. Perhaps, regarded as literature, the Relations des Jesuits scarcely merit attention, but as furnishing copious matter to the historian, they certainly deserve some notice. For forty years, from 1632-1672, these Relations were annually published at Paris. They have been collected in three large volumes and published by the Quebec Government. Their chief interest consists in the fact that these books contain the most minute details of colonial existence. The quaint old French is followed *verbatim* in the footnotes. Among the early narratives is "Prémiero Etablissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France," of Father Le Clercq. This work is highly colored, strongly advocates the Récoplet

cause, and is said to have been written under the eye of Frontenac. Bacquoville de la Potherie's "Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale depuis 1534 jusqu'à 1701," published in Paris, 1722, is held in high esteem as an authority upon the condition of the Indian tribes. "Histoire véritable et naturelle de la Nouvelle France," written by Pierre Boucher, and dedicated to Colbert, contains much valuable information concerning the colony. "L'Histoire du Canada," by l'Abbé Belmont, Superior of the Seminary of Montreal, is a short history of affairs from 1608 to 1700. A paper entitled "Recueil de ce que s'est passé en Canada au sujet de la guerre tant des Anglais que des Iroquois depuis l'année, 1662," contains a full account of the Lachine massacre, written by an eye-witness who accompanied Subercase to the scene. Nicholas Perrot's "Mémoires sur les mœurs coutumes et religions des sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale," seems to have been written as a sort of diary from 1665 till the death of Perrot. Colden gives part of this narrative in his "History of the Five Nations," published in London, 1747. It has also been printed in the third series of "Historical Documents," published by the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. We have also "L'Histoire de l'Hotel Dieu de Quebec," by Rev. Mère Juchereau; Dollier du Casson's "Histoire de Montréal," "Annales de l'Hotel Dieu de Ville Marie," by Sœur Morin; "Mémoires de Sœur Bourgeoys," all of which throw light upon the past. In their pages we may watch the grouping of events around the nucleus of a new nation, the light and shade of minor incidents playing about occurrences of a higher historic dignity.

Of all these writings, Father F. X. Charlevoix's history is decidedly first in value and importance. Charlevoix was a Jesuit, an accomplished man of the world, possessed of scientific attainment and a quaint sense of humor. His book is entitled "Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France, avec le journal historique

d'un voyage fait par l'ordre du Roi dans l'Amerique Septentrionale." He himself describes it as "A history from which I have determined to omit nothing that could possibly edify my readers." Parkman characterizes the Jesuit as careless, but Dr. Shea says, "Access to State papers, and the archives of the religious order to which he belongs, experience and skill as a practiced writer, a clear head and an ability to analyze, arrange and describe, fitted him for his work." The history of Frontenac, de la Barre and de Dénonville's administrations are exhaustively treated in these pages. In 1744, two editions of this history were published, one in three volumes, quarto, and the other in six volumes of small size, with the plates folded. In 1804, Heriot published an abridged translation of Charlevoix, but the English student owes much to the version and annotations of Dr. Shea, published in New York, 1866-72.

The colonists brought from their native land many songs, ballads and legends. All the light-hearted vivacity of the French temperament appears in these joyous refrains, the Old World superstitions revive in the ancient tales. Amidst virgin forests and tractless wastes of snow, the strains to which the hearts of these strangers in a strange land clung tenaciously, acquired additional pathos. They formed the lullaby with which the mother hushed her little ones to sleep, they were shouted by the hardy voyageur, wandering in the savage immensity of the wilderness; they were sung when family groups collected around the hearth where the blazing log fire hurled defiance to the roar of the fierce tempest without. The first germs of poetry were planted in tribulation and suffering, watered by tears, warmed by high-hearted enthusiasm. "Our old stories, our songs, proverbs and superstitions, all come to us from Normandy and Brittany," wrote a distinguished Canadian in 1835. "The tales of 'La Mer bleue,' 'Le merle blanc,' the songs 'Dans le prison de Nantes,' 'A St. Malo,' 'A Rouen,' 'C'est la belle Française,' the stories of wher wolves, the

will-o'-the-wisp, the imp that drives the horses, all these tales are delightful. They are something that the English do not in the least understand, something quite distinct from any Scotch superstition." This rich material of folk lore and tradition, in appearance feeble, in reality copious, effective, and full of force, furnishes the real foundation for our national literature.

With the conquest commenced a new era. Canada arising with renewed vitality above disaster and corruption, amidst the shadows of despair commenced a fresh existence, brilliant with hope. Order gradually succeeded chaos, subjection and dependence yielded place to an invigorating system of stable freedom. British rule brought material growth and educational advantages, thus affording a stimulus to mental activity, an incentive to liberty of thought. There was a great scarcity of books in the country. With a prolific modern press, in an age in which the making of books seems to have no end, it is rather difficult to realize a state of society in which books scarcely existed. Those who had literary tastes and inclinations had little opportunity for gratifying them. An educational report of 1824 informs us "that generally not above one-fourth of the entire population could read, and not above one-tenth of them could write, even imperfectly." The first newspaper, *La Gazette de Québec*, printed in both French and English, appeared 21st June, 1764. The first issue was printed on four folio pages of twelve inches by twelve, each containing two columns of small type. It had 150 subscribers. This paper retailed gossip and chronicled passing events. Being conducted with a caution verging on timidity, it rarely mentioned the politics of the day. The first article was the prospectus in larger type, in which the promoters promised to pay particular attention "to the refined amusements of literature, and the pleasant veins of well appointed wit." The latest English news was dated from April 11th, the latest American from May 7th. Some copies of this paper are still in existence.

At the birth of nations, as in the early youth of the individual, imagination plays an important part. The progress of poetry was timid and uncertain. Her first tentative efforts are merely expressions of the gay and jovial sentiments of our ancestors, epigrams, odes and satires; wholesome good sense clothed often in verse of very mediocre quality; songs, rough in form and finish, brightened by the sparkle of wit and vivacity. They consisted mostly of fugitive pieces, whose brief strains reflected the popular life of the period. They betray lack of cultivation and experience, need of that leisure and classical training which is indispensable to literary work of an enduring character. The best writing of this epoch is contributed by Quesnel, Mermet and Bibault. Michel Bibault is the author of a volume of poems entitled "Epitres et Satires." The verse (it can scarcely be dignified by the name of poetry) is harsh and imperfect, the sound is constantly sacrificed to the sense, the morality may be edifying, but it certainly cannot be termed entertaining.

J. D. Mermet, captain and adjutant in the regiment of Waterville, came to Canada in 1813 with his regiment. While in the country he published quite a number of poems, some of which exhibit considerable powers of imagination. His fancy appears to have been captivated by De Salaberry's heroism. He wrote "La Victoire de Chateauguay" and "Chambly," a really fine poem which ends with an eloquent and impassioned address to the Canadian hero. Among Mermet's shorter poems we may select "La Main," "L'Homme Dieu" and "L'Art Indéfinissable," as especially worthy of attention.

Joseph Quesnel was born at St. Malo, 1749. The story of his life is full of incident and adventure. A sailor by profession, a wanderer from inclination, he gained his experience in many lands. He visited, at different times, Pondicherry, Madagascar, French Guinea, Brazil and the Antilles. In 1779, he was in command of a war-ship bound

for New York, laden with provisions and ammunition, when he was made prisoner by an English frigate and taken to Halifax. Later he proceeded to Quebec, with letters of recommendation to General Haldimand, who had been acquainted with his family in France. After making a voyage to the Mississippi, the Frenchman became a naturalized British subject, and fixed his residence at Boucherville. In all his wanderings, Quesnel's inseparable companions were his violin and volumes of Molière and Boileau, authors whose inspiration can be very clearly traced in his work. This sailor was born a poet, making melody both of music and verse, as naturally and spontaneously as a bird sings, and often, it must be confessed, with as little regard for art. The cast of mind and inspiration of his poems are wholly Latin, his style is brilliant and original, and there is a jovial heartiness, a vigorous frankness about it, that one can fancy was imbibed from the strong salt flavor of the sea and the freedom of the tractless forest. Quesnel left four dramatic works which he set to music, "Lucas et Cécile," an opera; "Colin et Colinette," a charming little comedy, sparkling with spirit and vivacity; "l'Anglomanie," a comedy in verse, unpublished, and "Les Républicains Français," a prose comedy, published in Paris. Also a clever essay on the Dramatic Art, written in 1805 for a company of Canadian amateurs at Quebec. Among his shorter pieces may be noticed "Le Petit Bonhomme vit encore," "A Mon Esprit," "Le Ruisscau," "Sur l'Inconstance." Quesnel's musical compositions consist of several symphonies intended for a full orchestra, some duets and quartettes, a number of bright, pretty songs, several anthems, composed for the parish church of Montreal, which are still to be found there. A French poet, who spent some time in Canada, alludes to his brother poet as

"Quesnel, le père des amours
Semblable à son petit bonhomme
Vit encore et vivra toujours."

(To be Continued.)

REMINISCENCES OF COL. CLAUS.

By MR. ERNEST CRUIKSHANK.

III.

General Dearborn, the American commandant at Niagara, was in feeble health, and repeated disasters made him timid. For several weeks he did not venture to send even a patrol more than a mile beyond his entrenchments. After Boestler's defeat in the Beechwoods, the opinion was seriously propounded that his army should retire from Canada, but a council of war, summoned to consider this question, decided to remain, although boats were kept in readiness to provide for a retreat in a sudden emergency. Fort George was strengthened in every possible way, and the camp adjoining was surrounded by earthworks, palisades, and ditches. Yet Dearborn must have known that his force outnumbered that of his opponent in the proportion of at least two to one.

A letter from his army dated on the last day of June, printed in the New York *Evening Post* of that year, thus describes the situation:—"Our army, numbering 2,000, is entrenched on the right of the fort. Fort Niagara is garrisoned by about 400 men. Our pickets and foraging parties are constantly harassed by the loyal militia and Indians. Every night there is a skirmish. They keep our troops under arms during the night, which exhausts and wears them away very fast. Our force has decreased very much. The enemy's fleet plague our troops very much. It has been making demonstrations off Niagara for near two weeks. The weather is very wet. It rains at least half the time."

The next thing recorded in the letter-book is a General Order dated from Kingston, the 6th of July, 1813, thanking the Indians for their services, especially at the Beechwoods, and directing that a liberal donation should be made to them when they took their departure for their homes, and a double allowance given to the wounded and the families of the slain. A few days later, Gen. DeRottenburg

formally sanctioned a war-feast for the warriors engaged in the skirmish of the 8th at Butler's Farm.

As the British squadron had sailed for Kingston to refit, and did not return when expected, the Indians of Lower Canada became urgent in their demands to be permitted to retire to their homes. Sasori, their spokesman, said on this occasion ;—

“ We, chiefs and warriors of the Seven Nations, salute you, and thank the Great Spirit. We had a great regard for the King.

“ We came forward and met the enemy and were successful. We went to the Forty and there we divided, and you persuaded us to come forward again, and said that perhaps it would be but six days before we met the enemy again. We came. Our patience is at an end. The King has enemies below as well as here. This is the day our people begin to cut grass for their cattle, and we must prepare not to let our people and cattle starve.

“ We do not mean to run away. We are too grateful. We took a good many things the other day. What are we to get ? ”

Claus assured them that he would request Sir John Johnson to assist their families in harvesting their hay and grain, and that they would be paid for the “ things ” they had captured, upon which they appeared perfectly satisfied for the moment, and agreed to remain with the army.

He complained that the native Indians set them an evil example, as they plundered the inhabitants without distinction, and then dispersed to their villages to enjoy their booty. Cattle and swine were wantonly slaughtered, and the wretched settlers living between the lines were reduced to a pitiable condition by their ravages and those of the enemy's foraging parties. “ Our friends in the neighbourhood of the last scene,” Claus wrote to Sir John Johnson on the 11th July, “ are, I am afraid, now suffering. They are ordered from their habitations I am told.”

The slightest reverse often appears to have produced quite a disproportionate effect on the spirits of the American officials directing the conduct of the war. "The British, back of Fort George," wrote Mr. Lovett, a member of Congress, from Washington, "have lately driven in the picket-guard, killed some and took forty or fifty attempting to reinforce the guard. They have also crossed to Black Rock and destroyed the stores there. The Postmaster-General this morning (July 17), relating to these things, exclaimed, 'It does seem as if the very devil is in our luck.'"

Skirmishes were a matter of daily, sometimes hourly occurrence. Almost every night a small party of Indians or light infantry would steal forward in the darkness until within musket-shot of an American picket, when they would discharge their pieces and run away to repeat this exploit in some other quarter. The entire camp was frequently aroused and put under arms, and this sometimes occurred more than once in the course of a single night.

An occasional glimpse is afforded of some of these affairs. On the 12th of July, Claus writes to Harvey:—"A party of Algonquin and Nipissing Indians, to the number of nineteen, with one interpreter, Langlade, who received a wound on the 8th, went forward yesterday towards Fort George, and fell in with a party of eight dragoons near Mr. Ball's. They killed two and took the quartermaster-sergeant prisoner, with two horses. The sergeant is a Frenchman, three years from France, and a shrewd fellow. The Nipissing chiefs wish to carry their prisoner and deliver him to Sir John Johnson. I promised to make their request known to the General and have the interpreters busy trying to get them to deliver him up."

Again at 8 o'clock on the evening of the same day, he wrote:—"A party of St. Joseph's Indians (10) are just returned from Ball's. They have been engaged with the enemy there, in number near a hundred. One of the Indians is mortally wounded."

The weakness of DeRottenburg's division prevented him from even attempting to do more than watch and harass his antagonist. When informed that the Americans had regained the superiority on Lake Ontario by the launch of new vessels, and that Yeo would be unable to co-operate in the investment of Fort George for several weeks at least, he began to fortify a position on Burlington Bay, to which he anticipated he would ultimately be obliged to retire, and to repair the roads in his rear to facilitate a retreat in an emergency. The piteous entreaties of Proctor at Detroit, menaced by overwhelming numbers, forced him to detach several companies of the 41st to his support. Their departure left him with but two weak battalions of infantry (8th and 49th), four companies of the Royal Scots and 104th, a few artillery men and militia to make head against the entire American army which still consisted of two battalions of artillery, one of dragoons, one of rifles, and ten of infantry.

Besides being almost destitute of tents, blankets, and camp furniture, many of his men were in rags and without shoes. They were ill-fed and their pay was many months in arrears. As they approached the enemy, desertions became numerous.

But the inactivity of the American army, and the arrival of the remaining companies of the first battalion of the Royal Scots and the 104th—about the middle of July,—encouraged him to throw forward his right wing to Queenston, and fix his headquarters at St. Davids. His lines then extended from lake to river, a distance of about seven miles, confining the enemy to the ground they actually occupied, and preventing them from drawing any supplies from that side of the river. He excused himself for not having employed Indians in the expeditions into New York, upon the ground that it was difficult to restrain them from the commission of acts of cruelty and indiscriminate plunder, but added, "they are daily engaged with the outposts harassing and teasing them all day long."

Alarm and doubt pervaded the American camp. General Dearborn had been removed from the command, but Boyd, his successor, scarcely seemed more resolute or enterprising. The strength of the British reinforcement was much exaggerated and rendered him apprehensive of an assault. "The enemy are reinforcing every day," wrote an American officer on the 16th July. "We are encircled, they are in our front, the lake in our rear and flanks, and we do not hold any more ground than that on which we stand." "I think our situation very critical," said another. "The enemy are nearly in sight of our pickets. Their force is gaining every day—ours diminishing. We are attacked and harassed every night."

From the same source it is learned that a foraging party was attacked by Indians at Butler's Farm, on the 17th July. Three men were killed and nine wounded, and the detachment sent out to its support revenged themselves by burning Butler's house and farm-buildings. Three days later a detachment of militia was surprised and routed, losing seven of their number, and an entire brigade of more than a thousand men, which marched out hastily to their relief, skirmished fruitlessly for several hours.

A LETTER OF BENEDICT ARNOLD.

By MR. DAVID R. McCORD, M.A., Etc.

Mr. L. O. Armstrong was good enough to send me a photographic copy of the letter of General Benedict Arnold, dated Dead River, Oct. 13, 1775, which had been found among the papers of his late father Judge Armstrong, and which appeared in Vol. I of *CANADIANA*, page 111. I recognized the letter immediately as being one familiar for the last fifty years to the students of this period of American history.

This letter is addressed first to Jo' n Mercier, and what happened is this: The "faithful Indian Encas," either betrayed Arnold by delivering the letter to the Lieut.-Governor at Quebec, or the Indian was intercepted and the letter taken from him. From memory I incline to the first of these theories. Certain it was that the letter got into the possession of the Lieut.-Governor, and on the 28th October, Mr. Mercier was arrested, his papers seized and put on board an armed vessel. Certain citizens of Quebec thereupon held a meeting and called on the Lieut.-Governor to ascertain the cause of the arrest. He intimated that he had sufficient reason therefor. Subsequently he took into his confidence certain British officers of the Militia and communicated to them one or more intercepted letters directed to Mr. Mercier of a nature sufficient to warrant the above action on his part. I presume the Armstrong letter to have been one of these. It was not, however, shewn that anything treasonable had proceeded *from* Mr. Mercier.

I do not pronounce upon the genuineness of the letter. It would be interesting to know, if possible, how it came into Judge Armstrong's possession. I think I have heard it said that it belonged to his father. The word Quebec at this time was very generally spelt with a terminal k, which is absent in the letter before us, and in some of the published letters of Arnold's, Quebec is thus spelt. It might be that Arnold, as a precaution, duplicated this and other letters, and the one we are now considering may be one of the duplicates.

Another point strikes me at once. This letter has been sometimes supposed in the United States to be addressed to one John Manir. The name Mercier in the letter is so written that to one unaccustomed to the French language, it could fairly be mistaken for Manir.

WASHINGTON'S ADDRESS TO THE CANADIANS.

From "*The Remembrancer ; or Impartial Repository of Public Events, for the Year 1775*, published in London.

The following address was published in Canada on the arrival there of Col. Arnold, with the troops under his command :—

By His Excellency George Washington, Esq., Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United Colonies of North America, to the Inhabitants of Canada :

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN :—

THE unnatural contest between the English Colonies and Great Britain has now risen to such a height that arms alone can decide it. The Colonies, confiding in the justice of their cause, and the purity of their intentions, have reluctantly appealed to that Being, in whose hands are all human events. He has hitherto smiled upon their virtuous efforts,—the hand of tyranny has been arrested in its ravages, and the British arms, which have shewn with so much splendor in every part of the globe, are now tarnished with disgrace and disappointment. Generals of approved experience, who boasted of subduing this great continent, find themselves circumscribed within the limits of a single city and its suburbs, suffering all the shame and disgrace of a siege, while the free-born sons of America, animated by the genuine principles of liberty and love of their country, with increasing union, firmness and discipline, repel every attack and despise every danger.

Above all, we rejoice that our enemies have been deceived with regard to you. They have persuaded themselves, they have even dared to say, that the Canadians were not capable of distinguishing between the blessings of liberty and the wretchedness of slavery; that gratifying the vanity of a little circle of nobility would blind the people of Canada. By such artifices they hoped to bend you to their views, but

they have been deceived; instead of finding in you that poverty of soul and baseness of spirit, they see, with a chagrin equal to our joy, that you are enlightened, generous and virtuous, that you will not renounce your own rights, or serve as instruments to deprive your fellow-subjects of theirs. Come then, my brethren, unite with us in an indissoluble union, let us run together to the same goal. We have taken up arms in defence of our liberty, our property, our wives and our children; we are determined to preserve them, or die. We look forward with pleasure to that day, not far remote (we hope), when the inhabitants of America shall have one sentiment, and the full enjoyment of the blessings of a free government.

Incited by these motives, and encouraged by the advice of many friends of liberty among you, the grand American Congress have sent an army into your Province, under the command of General Schuyler—not to plunder, but to protect you;—to animate and bring forth into action those sentiments of freedom you have disclosed, and which the tools of despotism would extinguish through the whole creation. To co-operate with this design, and to frustrate those cruel and perfidious schemes, which would deluge our frontiers with the blood of women and children, I have detached Colonel Arnold into your country, with a part of the army under my command. I have enjoined upon him, and I am certain that he will consider himself, and act as in the country of his patrons and best friends. Necessaries and accommodations of every kind, which you may furnish, he will thankfully receive, and render the full value. I invite you, therefore, as friends and brethren, to provide him with such supplies as your country affords; and I pledge myself not only for your safety, but for an ample compensation. Let no man desert his habitation—let no one flee as before an enemy. The cause of America and of liberty is the cause of every virtuous American citizen; whatever may be his religion or his descent; the United

Colonies know no distinction but such as slavery, corruption, and arbitrary dominion may create. Come then, ye generous citizens, range yourselves under the standard of general Liberty—against which all the force and artifice of tyranny will ever be able to prevail.

G. WASHINGTON.

At p. 483 of vol. viii., of Mr. Justin Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America" is a cut of Washington's Book Plate, which bears as his motto: "Exitus acta probat."—Ed.

Queries and Replies.

In a recent number of your valuable paper you asked for information respecting "Fletcher's Field." Upon enquiry amongst our oldest citizens I find that this locality, in their younger days, bore rather an unenviable reputation. The name Fletcher applied to this field is of comparatively recent date; it took the name from an Irishman who pastured cows and sold milk. He lived in a little log-house, near the site of the Small-pox Hospital. This Fletcher had a friend of the same name, an Englishman; he lived on the other side of the mountain, and was known as Dick.

D. DENNE.

Sir Gordon Drummond, who was Lt.-Governor of Upper Canada, in 1815, is said to have been the only Governor who has administered the affairs of the country, up the present time, *born* in Canada (at Quebec.) What proofs have we such is the case? Can Mr. J. M. Lemoine give us anything certain on this point, or Rev. Mr. Scadding, of Toronto.

Who was the first wood engraver in Montreal?

What was the name and number of the last English regiment stationed in Montreal, and when did they take their departure?

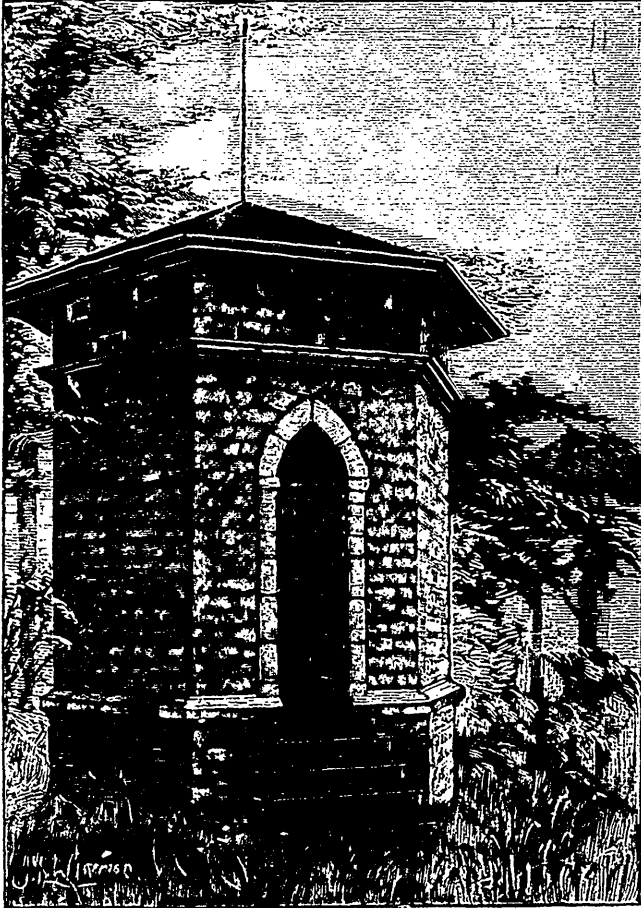
Where was the Olympic Theatre in this city in 1846?

J. H.

CORRECTIONS.—At page 16 of this volume, for Ferguson read Fergusson; for 1884 read 1774; for 1832 read 1835; for 1852 read 1853.

Canadiana.

QUARTERLY NUMBER.



THE TRAFALGAR TOWER.