
Visions of Old Quebec: Odd,
Eccentric and Whimsical
Characters & & Thumb-Nail
Sketch: Hon. George Irvine
& & Heroic Endurance and
Patience of a Noble Historian
By DR. PROSPER BENDER

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VISIONS OF OLD QUEBEC

Odd, Excentric and Whimsical Characters



O most people the events of bygone periods are subjects of great interest. They find satisfaction and pleasure in wandering back over the ways the departed souls have travelled; they wish to hear of their mingled warp and woof of character, their quality of temperament, their magnetic personalities, their martial and adventurous deeds and acts. These are the things that generally arouse, absorb and fascinate the living. Strangely enough the majority of folks find a greater interest, more poignancy, more vivid significance in the foibles and naughtinesses and perversities of their fellow-beings than in their virtues, perfections, and home-like qualities!

From the present chronicler's past there arises a shifting panorama of varied scenes and incidents, and a host of ghostly memories, in which appear many specimens of humanity, including the peculiar, morbid and fantastic. In these retrospective glances, or visions he beholds also welcome births, and mournful rustles of deaths, sad partings and harrowing farewells from loved ones. But the writer's intention to-day is to confine himself to visual-

izing more especially some of the queer folks and singular characters who figured in the life of Quebec, during his boyhood and early years of manhood. This he does mainly for the benefit of the younger generation. Many of the voices which he heard during these periods of his existence resound still in his ears, and not a few of the old faces peer upon him from the land of spirits. Some of the people appear as in a dream, like ships in the night when one is crossing the ocean, while others are almost complete entities, with their peculiarities and oddities, and their acts and deeds plainly writ.

No one, now-a-days, challenges the fact that we are all more or less peculiar or bizarre, with varying crotchets, kinks or wheels, in our mental make up. The queerest and oddest ones we meet are people of like passions, of similar feelings and failings as ourselves. Are we not children of one family with a line of demarcation between the sane and insane, not often easy to define? We have but one particular absurdity in common, death ends the comedy or tragedy in all cases. We may well exclaim with Abraham Lincoln who was particularly fond of William Knox's memorable lines:

"O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,

A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,

He passes from life to his rest in the grave."

The insignificance of mortal man *saute aux yeux*, as the French say, when we reflect that ultimately we shall fill some contracted spot in a graveyard, and likely to lie there as unremembered by the living, as the leaves that flutter to rest upon our tombs.

In the case of many of the characters whom the narrator has in his mind's eye, they gave the onlooker the feeling that they must have wandered from the pages of old authors and journals of a century and more ago. He has often found himself longing for the gift of portraiture which permitted of clever limners like Gaverni and Boz to seize and reflect typical personages, such as one saw here daily last century, strolling in the streets of "ye Ancient City," or in the homes, of both French and British. These were of all kinds, sane and unbalanced, some grotesque, irrepressible and care-free, others blended with touches of pathos, or simplicity, or compounded of good and evil, each and every one of them making their own appeal. Most were doubtless of types that have kept repeating themselves century after century, and likely to continue re-incarnating themselves in perpetuity. Many of them more pleasant to meet than to live with, however.

In the following sketches the characters have been placed in the setting and background in which they were found. They may, therefore, be considered as side-lights upon the life,

the habits and customs of the old days. Such descriptions do not always adapt themselves to compact summaries, but call for running commentaries, which shall be resorted to. And for the sake of brevity, often the substance of remarks and conversations shall be given, rather than the exact, original phrasing. In almost every instance names have been omitted and occasionally a little mystification employed, to avoid too easy recognition of the people limned, and to spare the susceptibilities of touchy, surviving relatives and friends.

In the gallery of complex, variegated and excentric types I am about to open for the entertainment of the "Telegraph's" Christmas readers, the first that I wish to draw their attention to is that of a lazy, idle, shiftless, good-for-nothing fellow, about eighty odd years old, who lived upon what he could obtain from the charitably inclined. He knew well how to chant the song of the woes and afflictions of the worthy and distressed poor. His only actual claim upon the consideration of the public was the fact that he had served under Colonel de Salaberry during the war of 1812, and notably at Chateauguay. Owing to the fact that he had been at one time a servant of Joseph Francois Perreault, my father's grand-parent, he claimed that he was entitled to the assistance and protection of my parent. And he was humored in that supposition! Like the British pauper that London 'Punch' speaks of, he considered that the public owed him a living: "Ain't their dooty? Don't we own them?" He acted as if he had a vested interest in the continuance of public charity. After my father's demise I continued giving this undeserving wretch cast-off clothing and an occasional twenty-five cent piece, for the sake of one whom I held

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so dear. One day I happened to be short of change and I gave him but fifteen cents, promising to make up the balance next time. There was a whole charity sermon, not omitting the warning, in the look he gave, which I confess somewhat embarrassed me. I was quite busy when he called again, and I failed to make up the trifle omitted the previous week. He looked at me in a semi-scornful, offended way, and inquired if I meant to cheat him out of what was due him? I felt irritated, and was about to speak my mind freely, when he conquered me by a touching reference to my father's unvarying kindness. There is no doubt but that he knew human nature and understood its foibles!

One day I came across this same worthless fellow strutting along St. John street, looking as perky as a bantam rooster. He was clad in a fantastic miscellany: a stove-pipe hat of ancient vintage, cocked to one side, a shiny black frock-coat with two silver military medals on the breast, and geranium flowers in the lapel. Trowsers baggy at the knees, and frayed at the bottom, boots down at the heels, a flaring red cravat, with a cigar snugly held in one corner of the mouth, completed his make up. Daintily he carried a cane which he kept whirling in one hand, à la Tommy Atkins. Added to this was an air of "Now, how do you like it?" He saluted me with gestures of considerable importance. On his face and all about him I could read of some recent or coming festivity, which made me inquire as to the cause of the transformation. In a strain of gladness he answered: "Why, don't you know that I was married yesterday to a bouncing beauty of eighteen summers? I suppose you will double my allowance now," with a mock beseeching look.

I thought first that he must be joking, but I soon saw he was in earnest: "Well, well," I said, "can it be possible that a useless, antiquated, old imposter like you could find a woman, old or young, to marry him?" Putting aside his every day, mild, obsequious manners, he straightened himself up, threw his head backward, and with lofty mien and fine irony in his voice, he exclaimed: "I am surprised at you, doctor? I thought you knew more of human nature. Let me inform you that a man may always find a woman to marry, though a woman may not always find a man. You also forget the old dicton: '*Chaque torchon a sa guenille*' (every dish-cloth has its rag)." With a self-complaisant air and a look in his eye which might be interpreted: "So, there you are, put that in your pipe and smoke it," he walked away with added dignity and elasticity to his step, humming a popular air:

"*Gai, gai, maluron, maluré.*"

The gate of happiness had swung open again for him and he was joyfully, if foolishly, treading the alluring garden of love, or whatever else it was to him!

There was a serio-comic element in the practicableness of a French-Canadian of Breton extraction, which may be worth recording in this study of types. He was as fixed as the pyramids of Egypt; nothing this side of the North Pole could prevent him pursuing a course he had decided upon. And he had besides, in a marked degree, the bumps, phrenologically speaking, of the love of life and caution. He had been a farmer and mounted the ladder of Mammon through an inheritance from an uncle. After a life of strenuous labor on a farm, he settled into one of comparative idleness in this city, with the result that he soon be-

came afflicted with dyspepsia. I urged him to follow the advice of Dr. Abernethy, the celebrated Scotch physician, who ordered his rich patients: "To live on sixpence a day and earn it," but this did not suit him or his excellent appetite. He was willing and ready enough to take medicine of any kind, but as regards limiting his dietary and taking exercise he demurred. Not being benefitted by my prescription or those of other practitioners, as might be expected in the premises, he resorted to patent medicines. After partaking of one quack preparation he became quite ill, and soon afterwards he had a similar experience. This cautioned him against patent medicines. Still, "hope springs eternal in the breast of man," and he adhered as much as ever to the belief that there was a nostrum that would cure him, only, where to find it was the question? The thought presently occurred that he must find some one "to pull the chestnuts out of the fire." He now became conspicuous for his generosity to sick people. He visited the afflicted in his neighborhood and provided those who were apparently suffering from troubles, resembling his own, with new patent remedies advertised to cure dyspepsia. He solicitously watched their effects, being satisfied that it was only a matter of time when he would secure a remedy for his own ailments. When I saw him last he was still seeking for "springs to catch woodcocks," as the Prince of Denmark once remarked.

Among the peculiar, excentric ones, but of a higher degree of intelligence than those above referred to, was a most absent-minded, yet delightful old gentleman. He had a gallant heart wrapped in modest garb, for his features were not prepossessing. Nevertheless he was contented inward-

ly with the way his Creator made him outwardly. A noble soul may find abode within an ungainly body, and a beautiful one may disguise a very objectionable soul. A somewhat sad and sensitive man he was, with a wit of grave grace. His style of expression was individual; he used forms of speech in use by the cultured only. He was also a ready and felicitous, and deft quoter. Nature, however, burdened him with what is generally considered a heavy handicap. He was "as deaf as a post," as the old saying is, but being a philosopher, familiar with the philosophy of Pythagoras downwards, he readily and cheerfully accepted the inevitable. His views on life were that it held so many bright and cheery incidents that we could afford to overlook the sad and distressing ones. He contended that in being grateful for what might be worse was a long way towards contentment. Not seldom he would say that it is best "to bear the ills we have than fly to others we know not of." Well I remember his saying to me once: "We should be thankful for the trials we have missed and doubtless deserved." He was evidently in accord with the truly Christian spirit of the old lady who was known, far and wide, as always transfiguring burdens into new blessings. This same contented old soul was heard more than once thanking Providence for one special benefaction. She had lost all her teeth but two, and she was so grateful that those left were opposite ones, which helped her to masticate her food. How true it is that there is always a flower somewhere for the hopeful believer! This is the secret of happiness. Both these good people approached the state of mind which James Whitcomb Riley refers to as "the simple soul reposing glad belief

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in everything being for the best." There can be no doubt that this is one of the hinges on which the gate of human happiness swings. Treasure up small pleasures, do not dissect them, is truly the *summa summarum*—the true way to enjoy life and win the grace of God!

Although our philosopher's soul was temperamentally tinged with melancholy, he carefully concealed the fact from others. With a quiet chuckle and play of fancy he would allude to his deafness thus: "The Divinity that shapes our ends has done me incalculable service. I contend that the possessor of a physical defect or blemish derives from it a blend of pleasure and sorrow, with more of the former than the latter. It constitutes a species of voluptuousness which lends additional interest to life." I happened once to express sympathy over his defect of hearing when he quickly replied: "An affliction did you say?" taking down the trumpet from his ear, "nothing of the kind, my friend. Providence could not have sent me a greater blessing. I can walk daily back and forth, to my office, without being hailed or intercepted by stupid or ignorant bores who think they have wits to air. No one waylays me, not even my creditors. (The latter was pure badinage, for it was not necessary to dun him). And, with a quiet leer in his eyes, he continued: "Yes, Sir, they leave me severely alone. Avaunt ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend." His conversation was generally interspersed with some such nuggets of homely philosophy.

There are many stories extant regarding his heedlessness. I will give the flavor of two. Of a gusty, tempestuous summer afternoon, while his family was away to the seaside, and the servant absent, he was expecting a

friend. Unexpectedly he received a message that called him out. Fearing that his visitor might come during his temporary absence, he pinned a note on his front door specifying that he would be back in one hour's time. Having transacted his business sooner than he anticipated he returned a half hour earlier than the period fixed. Reading his own note, he consulted his watch and remarked to himself: "Heigho, this is awkward and in this pelting rain too." He now began to walk up and down in front of his home, awaiting the arrival of his friend. The rain meanwhile was pouring down in torrential sheets; low rumblings of thunder could be heard reverberating in the distance, and flashes of lightning kept illuminating the darkened atmosphere.

On another occasion our distraught friend started on a railroad journey, accompanied by his wife. In a fit of absent-mindedness he bought only a single ticket. Presently his wife became aware of his omission, and joked him about it. This time he was equal to the emergency and he gallantly answered, if equivocally: "Why, so I have, my dear. I actually forgot all about myself." These are examples of his wayward flights, and many more could be cited.

Another figure appears from the mists of early days, in the shape of a gentleman who practised farming near this city, and was a valued contributor to an agricultural paper in Upper Canada. He held advanced views in agricultural and other matters, and was generally ahead of his time. For years he kept dinning into the ears of his neighbors, that the farmer who caused two plants to grow where one originally grew, was a public benefactor. Inadvertently or otherwise he was quoting from Gulliver's Travels:

"Whoever could make," said Gulliver, "two ears of corn or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, did more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together." This gentleman farmer also claimed that the quality of fruit and vegetables could be much improved by a system of grafting, anticipating what has been done of recent years by a celebrated Californian named Burbank. He also contended, and with truth, that while many of his views might be in dissonance with the knowledge of the age, yet they would be found in harmony with the greater age before us. He was a wit, too, and much of it was characterised by a jocund grace, fertility of badinage, with no little play of sportive fancy.

With simulated earnestness the same gentleman would advocate multiplying animal freaks by inbreeding. He kept expressing regrets that scientists neglected experimenting along those lines. He had seen at a Sherbrooke fair a cow born with two tails, and this gave him a text for long dissertations for the *gobe-mouches* among his neighbors. He would point out to them that by breeding that kind of cow, not only would the museums be benefitted thereby, but the nation's supply of oxtail would be doubled. To the epicurean who loved ox-tail soup this increased supply would be of much importance, he would roguishly add. He was an astute judge of human gullibilities!

By some mistake a newspaper in the Eastern Townships, where he was well-known, announced his death, referring to him as a man ahead of his time, although possibly a little visionary. He excitedly and earnestly objected to everything connected with that obituary notice. "I do not like

the flippant way in which they speak of me," he said, "nor do I like to be spoken of as the late so and so, especially when I am so far in advance of my time that I die ahead of it. I suppose, however, it is better to be a visionary than a ghost." This brand of humor resembles Mark Twain's, who, some years before his death, was reported as gathered to his forefathers, when he told newspaper reporters: "The details of my death have been very much exaggerated."

From the rural glades there came from time to time to Quebec a farmer noted for his comical, original remarks, which would flash from him under any and every circumstance. His right hand had been badly mutilated by the explosion of a gun. All he had left of it was a stump and the thumb. One day while he was laboriously endeavoring to affix his cross, to stand as his signature to an official document, a sympathetic looker-on observed: "It must be quite a trial for you to write." "Garn away," he quickly made answer, "it ain't writin that troubles, it's spellin', or the like of that!" When he drank, his head was a house of mad, wild dances, and his temper fiery and almost ungovernable. The boys enjoyed arousing him then, when he would dance a tarantella, blaspheming meanwhile. During these splenetic manifestations he used such robust phraseology that Laurence Sterne's recording angel might not care "to drop a tear over, and blot out forever." There was a commingling of naivete and sagacity in his make up that kept startling people. I may point out some more of his traits, on another occasion.

People of limited vocabulary are often uninteresting, yet the other extreme, incessant volubility, are trying to one's patience. I have known per-

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sons with a *pong-shong* for seasonable or unseasonable verbosity, that would make a saint resort to language not permissible in ladies' company. There was a well-known Quebecker who was troubled with this malady, and which is now scientifically recognised as *logorrhea*. He might be styled a human geyser. He was ever belching high-flown verbiage, grotesquely distorted words, and ambiguous phraseology generally. When he was in good form, and he choose to let loose his vocabulary he was "a holy terror," to use the lingo of urchins. One afternoon I met him in the neighborhood of a churchyard, and while speaking with him, I saw two men climbing a tree. Each had a short saw in his belt, but I did not notice it at the time. I enquired from the Vesuvius: "What are these men doing?" I was immediately overwhelmed with this diffuse, grandi-eloquent exposition: "My dear Sir, there can be no question in me mind but that these worthy laborers have been deputed to amputate some of the branchial extremities of these ecclesiastical, arboriferous excrescences, which while resplendent in vernal equipment, are nevertheless in danger of degenerating into a pathological state." This is equal to the Bowdoin professor who enquired from a Brunswick farmer, who had tied the tug of a harness with a cord: "Is the ligament adequate to the exigency of the emergency?"

On another occasion the same colloquial magnate, who was ever ready, with horse, foot and artillery, for an onslaught upon the follies of others, was heard expatiating over the weakness of a neighbor who had an Aldermanic bee in his bonnet. He informed a friend that he had been frank with this aspirant for municipal honors, and had approached him verbally,

in this wise: "Look here, my friend," says I, "you know there is no one who would enthuse more heartily than meself if you were to attain the zenith of your ambition, but is the game worth the luminary of a candle, as the French so cleverly have it? It was only yesterday that I was revolving over in me mind the lucubrations of your endeavors to secure your re-election, and it flashed upon the retina of me optical organs that you would be more felicitously and profitably pre-occupied in the bosom of your amiable and interesting family, than a quarreling and a wrangling with the other theaves in the City Hall?" At times it would seem as if nothing could stop him talking, unless it were the millennium, and that was not likely to begin in our generation. He had strong party feelings in politics, and his animadversions on political foes were plentifully besprinkled with forcible denunciatory polysyllables. He revelled in the use of words seldom disturbed from their resting place in the dictionary. He might fairly have been labelled the Dogberry of Quebec City.

Another character of somewhat similar stamp, but who considered himself much the superior of the former, is entitled to be included in this contemporaneous gallery. His floodgates of conversation were ever unloosed and kept wide open. He had at his command avalanches of words and sentences; he scattered the foam of words and created cloulandls of verbiage incessantly. They truly came from him in *torrents*. One had hardly time for the mental digestion of the mass of words, which irrupted from him, when others were poured forth in equal abundance. As Disraeli once said of Gladstone: "He was intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity." One could also have compared him

with Tennyson's brook, "ever rushing on." In point of fact, it was talk, talk, eternal talk. He spoke so rapidly that he would have to pause and gasp for breath, which soon caused his listener to do likewise. His vocabulary in fine, was of the rapid fire magazine order, and it was seldom that any one else could find a place to wedge in a word. Faucher de St. Maurice, in summing him up one day, stated: "He is a roaring cataract of twaddle." In fine he lacked little in conversational powers save terminal facilities.

He loved calamity and was never so happy as when he was growling about something or other. In a great degree he had the knack of magnifying evils and making mountains out of molehills. He was a striking example of a pessimist; and to put it bluntly, "he was the limit." According to him the country was ever going to the demnition bow-wows. He was also a great prevaricator, if not a downright liar, which caused Faucher, who seldom said anything derogatory of any one, to say of him: "We might bracket him without injustice with Munchaussen and Ananias." But unlike the celebrated character in Mark Twain's "Knights of the Round Table," who told lies of the stateliest pattern with gentle and winning *nai-veté*, he was not "willing to listen to anybody's else's lies and believe them."

This same individual had a perverse habit of constantly differing in opinion from others; to hear himself talk, doubtless. He always took the opposing view of whatever question discussed; it did seem a law of his nature. He insisted not only upon voicing his opinions, but would antagonize unnecessarily the opinion of

others. He did remind me of a character of Theophrastus, who was constantly advancing a theory in regard to the cause of tides. "Some say one thing," he would remark, "and some say another, but if I was to give my opinion it would be different." He was also so cock-sure of himself that he tried one's patience to the verge of exasperation, but he was so polite withal that one did not like to send him to that region where we hope our friends are not. Blumhart could not bear him, and he used to say: "He gives one the idea of flourishing on wind."

I used to dread meeting this ever overflowing Heckla. He waylaid me, one day, on Saint Louis street, and just as I was thinking how I could get rid of the pest, I saw coming towards us a Frenchman recently arrived from Paris. He was another belching volcano, but of a most entertaining and instructive kind, however. Ordinarily I would have been pleased to converse with this gentleman, but at the moment the thought uppermost in my mind was to get rid of the fiend at my elbow. I hastened to introduce them, remarking: "Gentlemen, you cannot fail to enjoy yourselves; I know no talkers who can hold a candle to either of you. Excuse me, I am in a hurry. *A bon entendeur salut.*" Later, neither had anything to say that was favorable of the other. Our garrulous windmill especially complained that the Parisian had nearly talked him blind. I confess I rejoiced not a little that our bore had been overmatched. I understand that he took to glaring at the Frenchman when they met afterwards. As one was large and tall, and the other, the Frenchman, short and lithe of figure, Buteau Turcotte used to refer to their meeting as: "The modern tussle between Goliath and David;

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the little hero coming out best as of yore."

I think it was about this time that Punch propounded the famous query: "What is a bore," with the clever and satirical answer: "A man who persists in speaking of himself, when you are especially eager to speak about yourself." This was appropriate to one of the personages who was engaged in the particular verbal encounter just alluded to.

I would like to say a few words *en passant*, about the gentleman whom I introduced to our Quebecer. I preserve a clear mental picture of his personality, remarkable traits and marvellous accomplishments. He was a welcome guest at D'Aiguillon street, when he dropped in of a Sunday afternoon, which he did a number of times. I have already written of Achintre at some length in the columns of the "Daily Telegraph", a few years ago. He spoke in a steady stream, with great volubility, on any and every subject, as if they were all at his fingers' ends. He would, at times, apparently begin nowhere to end finally everywhere, speaking with much clever diction, eloquence, striking imagery, subtleness of inference, irony and sarcasm in discussion, and critical certitude. Like the Turks he had volcanic possibilities; and when excited he was given to be fiery, pungent and ironic. He presented his facts with clarity of detail, grace and power of expression. In bold and clever surveys he would offer kaleidoscopic views of life, dilate upon the various metaphysical solutions of its enigmas; comment upon the droll and comical situations that had come under his notice, and the peccadilloes, infirmities, and absurdities of humanity. And added to these mental attractions, he had a pleasing personality, a level, racy and breezy Bohemian

manner. The portals of the intellectual life of Quebec and Montreal swung wide open before him, and he was privileged to enter its gardens and attractive grounds and pick the flowers that pleased his eye!

No matter what he touched he caused it to glow with interest and intensity; he pressed familiar *dictons* in a quaint and arresting form of words; he presented reflections upon underlying philosophies of daily life in flowery metaphors and many-sided figures of speech. As a story teller few could excel him. In a voice flexible and rich toned, and with rare *verve* and entrain he would tell stories equal to some of Balzac's and Guy de Maupassant's, such as are found in their *Contes Drolatiques*, with similar quiet powers of observation, pathos and humor. He constantly bubbled over with wit and good humor, and jollity blended with valuable information. He dazzled his auditors and kept them, when he so willed it, in a very whirlpool of fun. A decidedly independent creature he was, whose law of life was his own whims; he did whatever his individual desires dictated, ignoring conventionalities. But he inclined to reticence and a generous incredulity, concerning other's moral failings!

It was highly interesting and most delightful to listen to Achintre and Faucher de Saint Maurice when their conversational fountains were unsealed. It was then a rapid exchange of witticisms, bon-mots, delicate and whimsical bits of persiflage, with many airy interpolations. They would touch this and that with light wit, give bits of charming characterisation of erratic human nature, or introduce biting dialogues in which thrusts and retorts were numerous. They took particular pleasure in springing upon each other amusing and suggestive collocations

and assonances of words. And many of them were so exceedingly funny! Through the aid of eloquent gestures and actions, motion of eyes, facial expressions and the glowing and shadowing of the voice, they greatly heightened the effect of their words. They succeeded in giving life to the trivialities, to the haps and mishaps, and serious events of existence. The bright and clever things were so many that they subsequently jostled one another in our minds and occasionally led to some confusion. No "grouches" or "blues" could long exist in the company of these admirable entertainers. When their waves of mirth passed over, serious and dignified reserve ensued.

Within them both burnt the Celtic fire, but of the two, Faucher was the more *prime-sautier*, his repartees came more spontaneously, his parodies were more lively and his witticisms more ingenious. Oliver Wendell Holme's bright reference to the poet, T. B. Aldrich is quite applicable to Faucher: "You've only got to touch him," he said of him, "and he goes off like a rocket." But when matters requiring good judgment had to be decided, when questions of logic had to be considered, when irony and sarcasm were called for, when facts and figures were needed, Achintre was decidedly Faucher's superior. They both gave a certain lilt or rhythm to their sentences which was very pleasing to the ear!

Who has not felt that it is well at times to let the mind wander into airy nothings, and take in just such pastimes as the company of these gentlemen afforded. Those who arouse and make us laugh, who cause us to sing and feast and forget, especially in times of high tension of mind, fulfill a useful and worthy role. And to both Achintre and Faucher I am indebted

for the whiling away of many hours and the experience of many gratifying emotions, through their interesting, entertaining, and engrossing talk-fests. And to the memory of them both I remove my hat! Many times since my return to this city I have found myself longing for their congenial company and that of some few others. This reference to them alone, opens up cell after cell of sleeping, cherished memories.

Achintre was a distinguished journalist and chronicler, still well remembered by many in the capital and metropolitan cities. Apart from his other gifts he possessed a remarkable range and scope of political thought that is well evidenced in his *Silhouettes Parlementaire*. They created quite a furore when they appeared. These portraits are *tiré sur le rif*, as the French say, and are even now referred to by politicians. He placed each portraiture against a background of rich and interesting incidents. Poor Achintre had high expectations when he came to Quebec and he built many edifices on the vague foundations of airy imaginations. Of the many dreams he weaved, few took outward or visible form.

Among the peculiar ones of those days was a genius, wonderfully dowered, but inclined to take advantage of his friends in various ways. In his profession he was considered an expert, but it was more especially through his social acquirements and conversational faculties that he charmed his way through the world. He spoke French with distinction and grace; his diction was excellent, and enunciation admirable. His comments were individual and original, and the children of his whims were presented felicitously and in picturesque phrasing. He was an entertaining and in-

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forming contour. If given the starting point of an ordinary incident, a mere hint, he would surround the circumstances with a halo of wit and humor, and pathos, that would enshrine it in the laughter and tears of his hearers. When he spoke of incidents of history, there was always a sense of historical and narrative values in his references. He did not often speak of his trials and troubles, which generally were of a monetary nature, but when he did it was with a glow of good nature which raised them out of the commonplace. Many things he related as having seen during his travels, were, at the time, considered apocryphal, until verified later.

Through the recesses of memory there rings one anecdote connected with him that merits being printed. He used to resort to a restaurant kept by a French-Canadian named Laforce, a sensible level-headed and tactful fellow, with the manners of a Chesterfieldian. This boniface was a liberal, even generous fellow, but he did not like being imposed upon. About the time I am writing of, graduated bottles came into use. The "bar-keep" could see at a glance how many drinks were taken. This customer and others often ordered their liquor sent to a side-table, and the consumer was charged according to the quantity registered on the bottle. After a while our *bon-vivant* got in the way of replacing with water what he had taken in excess of the quantity he wished charged against him. It followed after this innovation, as surely as night succeeds day, that he regularly patronized this particular restaurant. After a while he began to notice that the cognac was not as palatable or as strong as formerly. The fact was that Laforce had "caught on" to the trick, and ordered that the same bottle be al-

ways served him. "Look here, Laforce," cried out this customer, "your cognac used to be good and strong, but this is without flavor and as weak as water." "How strange, my dear sir," said the host. "All of it has come out of the same bottle. I keep it specially for you. See for yourself, your name is on the bottom of the bottle. Would you prefer us hereafter to serve your drinks from an ordinary glass?" There are other stories connected with this character that are still pattering along the aisles of the recollection of many old Quebecers, and worth recounting.

A man's moral nature may be no more his free choice than is his physical conformation! At any rate this mortal was not of the kind who purchase future bliss by a present comfortless and joyless existence; he believed in accepting and enjoying any temporal pleasure available. He loved a good dinner and good wines; and he was an excellent judge of both. He would have lived in truly sardanapalian luxury, if he had had the means. Eating with him was an important business, and under the influence of a good dinner his conversation was characterized by still more subtlety and sparkling finesse.

When the late Willis Russell, a man of many acquisitions, besides being a good hotel-keeper and an enterprising and generous citizen, came to Quebec to open the Saint Louis Hotel, he knew very few of its residents. There was then an old fop who had been well-off, but on his "uppers" at this time. He longed for a good dinner, one Saturday evening, and he decided he would have one at the expense of the new hotel proprietor. He partook of a hearty meal, ordered the best wines the house had in its cellar and the finest cigars. When he had dis-

posed of a bountiful dinner, he called for mine host Russell. He introduced himself, said he wished to congratulate the house upon the excellence of its *cuisine* and *vins de meilleur cru*, and wanted to know if he might not have the honor of breaking a bottle of champagne with him. This bottle was followed by another, and many a joke was cracked. Finally the guest brought around the subject of the impositions practised upon hotel people, and put Willis Russell the question: "Now, suppose, that a man who had seen prosperous days, should happen to be hard up and had feasted on one of your excellent dinners, including your choicest wines and cigars, while he had not a cent in his pocket to pay *l'addition*, what would you do to him?" "Oh, I don't know," good-naturedly answered Russell, for he was big-hearted and not without the tinge of a Bohemian in his veins. Being further pressed as to what punishment he would inflict, he replied: "Well, I should probably kick him out of the place." "This suppositious case is truly mine, Mr. Russell." Turning his back and lifting his coat-tail, the impecunious fellow, meanwhile taking on a sheepish look, said: "Pay yourself, my good friend." No one loved a joke better than Willis Russell and he simply roared. "That is one on me," he exclaimed, in the vernacular of the day, shook hands with our cheeky fop, and ordered another bottle of wine. They then "made a night of it," as the sports say.

Another character around whom reminiscences pile high with many old Quebecers, was a gentlemanly inebriate with charming manners. He would have graced society anywhere. Bon-mots, prompt sallies, witty and humorous sayings, and epigrams were

ever on the tip of his tongue. At times he seemed a human fountain bubbling incessantly wit and humor. He always had a stock of pleasant words, some drollery or humorous expressions, and many smiles to accompany his hearty hand clasp. He had the soul of a troubadour, and in his younger days, I am told, an air of romance, but when I knew him he was short and of rotund figure. I have often seen of an afternoon, this bibulous soul wending his way homewards half-seas over, frequently with a bouquet of flowers in one hand. He would occasionally complain, when his steps were particularly unsteady, that it was not the length of the way home that troubled him, it was the wide sidewalks. It would happen at times that he would jostle against people while walking, when he would immediately steady himself and profusely apologize for his awkwardness. If the person towards whom he moved unsteadily were a lady, he would shake himself together, doff his hat and give it a grand and graceful sweep towards the sidewalk, in ultra-castilian style, smile genially, beg her to accept a flower, if he happened to have a bouquet with him, and pay her some delicate compliment while apologizing. Those who knew him readily accepted his courtesy and excuses.

One day this convivial and jolly soul stopped me on his way home, when he was feeling pretty mellow. He had been reading Charles Lamb's essays and wished to know if I admired him as much as he did. He desired me to understand that he coincided with Lamb, that liquor in moderation was not best for man, a bottle a day was only about a fair allowance. He believed, with the English essayist, that the human gullet along which wine trickled down so pleasantly and grati-

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fyngly was given man for just that purpose. Nature never does anything uselessly, he said, with a knowing look. He asked if I recollected the incident when Lamb was returning home in a coach after copious libations, and the query of the old lady who inquired of the coachman: "Are you full inside?", and Lamb's reply: "I am quite full madam; that last drink I had did the business." The original story varies somewhat from this version, but it was amusing enough as he gave it. And he continued in his usual racy vein; and this time, too, reminiscently, as the critics say, of Lamb: "If reason causes me to believe when sober that two and two make four, what of it, if when drunk, I make it five? Two and two will nevertheless make four, as it did before I took the extra glass which befuddled my brain." This is a sample of some of his desultory conversation. He always took delight in making certain of his statements explode in gaily colored bubbles.

One of his boasts was that he had never been helplessly drunk, and I would not care to challenge this statement; but perhaps he was like the saloon-keeper, who maintained he would not consider a man drunk unless he saw him enter his bar, hang his hat on a gas-jet and ask the stove for the pleasure of a two-step." Of this old Quebecer, it might be said that his outflow fully equalled his inflow of spirits. As can readily be imagined he was the joy and admiration of a large ring of friends, and was considered "the whole show" on convivial occasions.

On holidays it was his habit to "crook his elbow" more frequently. Entering a hotel early of a St. Jean Baptiste morning, he ordered a glass of his favorite liquor, held it up to the light and remarked: "Well, look out, you puny weakling, your troubles are only just beginning. Squeeze yourself

inside (*tasse toi dans la place d'Armes*) for there will be a rush before evening. (*car il y aura foule ce soir*)". Stretching his gullet to its utmost limit he slowly poured down the spirits, and afterwards smacked his lips in a gustatory manner.

After a serious illness from which this poor fallible mortal barely escaped with his life, his physician warned him that if he returned to his old habits, he would die within a short time. For a week or more he was completely abstemious. Then, one morning on the way to his office he passed *Le Chien d'Or* restaurant kept by Laforce. Determinedly he walked straight by, without looking at the place. He soon stopped for a moment and then started again, but the temptation was too great. Muttering to himself, *Contre Laforce, il n'y a pas de resistance* (Against *la force* (force) there is no resistance), he retraced his steps, his good resolution scattered to the four winds of heaven. He then and there fell from grace and lapsed into his old habits, until he became bed-ridden when perforce he abandoned liquor. When a man has been through the deep waters of inebriety and is making a battle to swim back to the shores of sobriety, the struggle is no ordinary one, as but too many can testify! There was a kindred spirit living in those days who used to complain that Bacchus was the meanest of all the gods—the more you worshipped him over night, the worse he treated you in the morning. As regards both these men's failings, their friends were inclined to look at them with the eye of charity "which covers a multitude of sins", as we all know; or in other words, pretty much as Nelson did the signal from Sir Hyde Parker, at the Battle of Copenhagen, ordering him to cease fighting the enemy when he turned towards it his sightless eye.

Thumb-Nail Sketch---Hon. George Irvine



There were one person more than another whom Sir Adolphe Chapleau hated and dreaded, at the same time, it was the Hon. George Irvine, a member of the Local Legislature for years, representing the county of Megantic. He was a dominating personality in politics, and before the courts, civil and criminal. To behold him in his seat in the House one would have taken him for a refined, austere politician or statesman, wrapped in dignity and elevated meditation. Temperamentally he was cold and passionless, almost entirely governed by intellect. There was not even the suspicion of a smile on the classical outlines of his face. It was impressive, and sphinx-like. Very noticeable were a firm, set-look about the lower jaw and chin, and a shrewd keenness about his blue-gray eyes. He was of good stature and mien, and a well-bred grace and distinction of manner enveloped him. If a question arose, however, in which he was concerned, a sudden mental alertness and fox-like vigilance were conspicuous, which caused him to be dubbed by his enemies, The Megantic Fox. Nothing escaped him. When he rose to his feet to address the House or a Court of Justice, the mask of indifference and non-chalance was dropped, his face would light up with a

pleasant smile and his demeanor change to one of affability and cordiality—a typical *débonnaire* of the old school. Nothing seemed to have the power to affect his serenity or to ruffle his soul. No matter if he were annoyed or angered, the friendly beam of the face and the suavity of manner were insistently present, but a close observer might notice a dangerous glint of the eyes. He was the embodiment of a *sua viter in modo, fertiter in re* personage.

There was a pleasant modulation and intonation in Irvine's voice. It rarely became vibrant, nor did he strike the high treble, even under excitement. He spoke rapidly, fluently and smoothly; he seldom paused for a word, words gushed from him in a stream. One had to be alert and think quickly to follow his rapid utterance. He did not resort to any oratorical climaxes or to thrilling appeals; it was always analytical and vigorous reasoning with a luminous marshalling of facts. He was free from dramatic attitudes or wild gesticulations, truly English or Gladstonian in this respect. In debate he was conciliatory in tone, speaking with precision, polish and easy grace. He preferred plain, direct, unvarnished statements to the flowers of rhetoric, quickly marshalling his facts and exposing them rapidly. He did not essay to conceal his acts behind a flood of wordy extrava-

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gance of words, or bolster his arguments with sophistries and Aristotelian subtleties, as his rival Chapleau often did. Nevertheless Irvine could be subtle enough when he wanted to be. He could split hairs, he could resort to many shadings and distinctions of interpretation and finesse, when it suited his purpose, but he preferred cogent, broad and compelling arguments, couched in virile and correct English. However, like Joey Bagstock, he could be "deep, Sir, deep and devilish sly." His speeches and addresses left an impression on the mind full of vitality and color. He had marked powers of exposition, compactness of thought, accuracy of judgment, astuteness of reference and shrewdness of observation, as well as an encyclopaedic knowledge of politics, of law and general facts. These gifts and acquisitions made him a host in himself and a dangerous foe. In fine he was a personality, a legal and a political entity, who always focused public attention. It was generally conceded that he was one of the great jurists of his day, and it may be remembered that such legal luminaries as Judge Black, the Judges Stuart, and Messrs. Casault, Langlois, Holt, Angers and Dunbar were his contemporaries.

Irvine was a towering figure in a debate. He exhibited much discrimination, clarity of detail, grace and power of diction in his arguments, which he poured forth in crisp torrents. Quick to see through the vulnerable gaps in an opponent's armor, readily he detected an incorrect statement or a wrong date. When this happened he would pounce upon the delinquent with the alertness of the hawk. Chapleau's habit of inaccurate statements and his blunders over many questions, left him open to many scathing "take downs."

Irvine was never slow to trip him under such conditions. He would by such exposure, and by banter and raillerie, break the force of his eloquent passages. He was not without humor, and now and then he indulged in quiet wit to lessen the strain of his own intense thoughts and to jolly an opponent. While modest and unassuming he was not without "an unco guid conceit of himself"; but like Tennyson, when, accused of being vain, he could have replied: "I have good reason to be."

How Irvine loved to taunt Chapleau! He would deliver in gentle and flexible tones of kindness the most serious accusations, biting and scathingly sarcastic; but always in strictly parliamentary language. He fought fairly; asked for no quarters and gave none. The member for Megantic seemed at his best when attacking Chapleau, and the latter was certainly at his worst when replying to him. He would fall into a cold rage over Irvine's mocking reflections and censure. Outwardly he seemed indifferent, but inwardly he was all groans. When other members attacked him he would tilt his head backward with an assumed abstracted pose, occasionally raising his eyebrows in a kind of parliamentary askance, but when it was Irvine that was *une autre histoire*. I have seen Chapleau vince and writhe under the quick, satirical lashing which his arch-enemy administered. Irvine was ordinarily particularly affable and courteous in debate; but when dealing with his rival, he threw the niceties of discussion to the four winds and heaped upon him, unsparingly, rebuke, sarcasm and irony. He did it almost invariably in bantering tones, which greatly provoked his enemy. Instead of puncturing his blunders with shafts of wit, he preferred to smash them

with the hammer of logic and hard facts, thus knocking into pieces his pretensions. Innumerable were their bickerings and Chapleau generally came off second best.

No ordinary antipathy actuated Irvine towards Chapleau; he called it an instinctive dislike, and it was hearty and genuine. He was heard to say once: "Abraham Lincoln disliked a man whom he did not understand," and he added: "I understand Chapleau only from one point of view" and he left the auditor to draw his own inferences. In the House they glared at each other with their hands on their swordhilts, metaphorically speaking.

In the true sense of the word, Irvine was not an orator. There was a quality of refinement and artistic form in his eloquence which appealed to the cultured classes, but did not kindle much enthusiasm among the masses. Although there was a fine inflection and ring to his voice, it did not possess the wonderful melody and sweetness of Chapleau's, nor had he that inexplicable, undefinable charm characterised as personal magnetism that secures for a speaker spell-bound audiences.

Chapleau could impart to his voice strikingly emotional and pictorial impressiveness and wonderfully cadenced tones. To the magic of this voice, to the fascination which his oratorical gestures and handsome physique and bearing exercised, rather than to his logical or reasoning powers, may be attributed the successes he obtained in the political and criminal arenas. He was pre-eminently a criminal lawyer with all the acquired sophistries of his profession and the attractive qualities which tell with a jury. He found politics a more profitable field to exploit. He infused in his speeches a glow of rich, warm pulsing tones, delivered them in a voice vibrant

with feeling, and punctuated them with eloquent gestures. They often consisted of hypothetical arguments, inaccurate or deceptive statements, couched in involved, diffuse sentences and in incorrect language. He had a habit of not completing his phrases, but with a shake of his leonine head and one of his familiar gestures he made his auditors understand what was in his mind, but not uttered. Meanwhile the impression of great eloquence and cleverness were conveyed. It was not, however, the kind of eloquence which one heard from Mercier, and a few others in the House. In comparison with Irvine, Chapleau could not begin to present his facts as clearly or as effectively as his opponent, nor could he use his statistics or illustrations with the same dexterity and sureness of grasp. He never, unaided, logically unravelled a tangled political or economical question!

During Chapleau's regime as prime minister of the province, schemes were as plentiful as the leaves of Vallombrosa, and politicians fattened upon them. When his politico-economical policies are studied and analyzed, especially in the light of the present day, they are found to be full of flagrantly rapacious and scandalous schemes. There were several notorious scandals connected with the premier and his administration, but they were cleverly hushed. In the case of the sale of the North Shore Railway, he trampled upon the indignation of the people and ignored their protests. The servile majority at his back in the Legislature were outrageously indifferent to public criticism, and he was thus enabled to carry out this project, and others equally objectionable. This was a debasing era of corruption and decadence in provincial politics: and a fever of exasperation and general in-

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dignation soon spread over the province, which led to dissensions among the party, and finally swept them out of power.

Chapleau was intensely selfish—he was selfishness personified. It was ever himself, first, last and all the time. And as for gratitude, it was something unknown to him. When the friends to whose fidelity and cleverness he owed his advancement and success in politics became convinced of the existence of these despicable traits in their idol, an estrangement ensued, and later when he played them false in an important financial deal, they entirely deserted him. Thereafter his course was downwards. If ever the true history of his career be made public it will be found merged in the acts and deeds of a *coterie* of keen, shrewd counsellors, headed by C. N. A. Dansereau, the premier's right hand man and *fidus Achates*. Senecal, a most able promoter of clever and artful schemes, was another of Chapleau's lieutenants, and they both found in Blumhart a valuable and astute co-operator and ally.

Some time later Chapleau was called to Ottawa, but temperamentally and intellectually he did not belong to that larger parliamentary arena. Recognizing him to be a failure, Sir John A. Macdonald disposed of him in his usual way, under such circumstances, by a so-called promotion. He translated him to the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Province of Quebec.

Before Chapleau's time expired in the gubernatorial chair, he set to scheming for his re-appointment and made advances to both sides of politicians to attain his aim, but unsuccessfully. Most piteously did he beg to be retained, assuring one and all that he had not been a partisan, nor fractious, that he had invariably followed

the behests of his constitutional advisers, and so forth. This was a sad and pitiable spectacle! It is an undeniable fact, however! His fall was final and complete after he returned to Montreal. There were then "none so poor as to do him reverence," and he died abandoned by most of his old friends and followers. This must have ate into his very heart, but who shall say that he did not deserve it? And this was the end of one who had worn an earthy halo for many years, in politics. A thick mantle of oblivion is now wrapped around his memory.

During the period of which I am treating there was much clashing of conflicting ambitions in the Local Legislature, and during its sittings there could be heard the exciting sword play of many political gladiators. Many were the pungent verbal encounters with partisan invective and plotting and counter-plotting and some base desertions and treacheries. There were then in the House such able men as Lynch, Loranger, Church, Joly, Flynn, François Langelier, Wurtele and others, but towering above them all were Irvine and Mercier—the latter a giant in oratory, a clear-headed political economist, and a remarkable tribune and statesman. He was also the most progressive and sagacious leader of his day in provincial politics, and an imposing, vigorous personality with a fine noble Roman head! It was my privilege to hear him deliver several ringing and masterly discourses, when at the apex of his glory. He then thrilled his audiences to a fever heat of enthusiasm by his elquence and convinced them by the force of his logic. He ever sought to urge measures large, arresting and decisive, and he generally carried them in a blaze of triumph. But to return to my theme.

On the 5th of August, 1879, an epochal event happened in the political history of the Province of Quebec. The government of the late Hon. Henri Gustave Joly (he had not been knighted then), found itself in a minority of two votes on a personal question. The news spread over the country on the wings of the wind, and created no little excitement. The next day all kinds of rumors spread about the city and province concerning the coming action of the government. When the House met every seat on the floor was occupied, and a billowy sea of humanity crowded the galleries. All were seething with excitement, holding their breaths in suspense. I had the good fortune to be present on this memorable occasion. After some routine work, Irvine rose to offer explanations in behalf of the government in regard to the vote of the night before. His face was illuminated with abundant geniality and kindness, and his manner blithe and happy. He began first to compliment the honorable leader of the opposition, whom he styled "the gentleman of melodramatic airs, with a conspicuous stray lock of hair upon his noble brow," (and he bowed to Chapleau with mock respect) upon his signal victory. He assured him, in bantering tones, that the skillful marshalling of his highly disciplined followers, the night before, reflected the greatest credit upon his generalship. In the tone of a friendly, good-natured conversation, he continued at some length, evidently bent upon prolonging the suspense of the enemy. He next remarked that he was puzzled to understand why the occupants of the opposite benches should be torn alike with apprehension and anticipation. Their ebullient eagerness for "the flesh pots of Egypt" was a question of taste and propriety, but he would not discuss that

feature of the case. He would say this only, that it would be more seemly if the honorable gentlemen concealed their greed of office. He begged to assure them one and all that the peace and tranquility of the cool shades of opposition were preferable by far to the storms, perils and responsibilities of power. The sweets of office are at best enervating; it is a case of groping among gleams and shadows and disappointments. He had occupied both positions and he knew whereof he spoke, and advised them to stay where they were.

In any case, he asked, are not the gentlemen sitting on the benches of opposition a little premature in their conclusion that the fate of the government is sealed? People should not be longing for men's shoes before they are dead. "The whole question," he explained, "resumes itself in this: Has the Hon. Mr. Joly and his cabinet forfeited the confidence of this House? Perhaps it has, and perhaps it has not. This remains to be seen. The government certainly had the confidence of the electorate a short time ago, and possibly it has of the House, too, as at present constituted. We shall soon know how we stand as regards this matter. It may happen that the ministry will again find itself in a minority, (and he beamed benevolently and archly upon Chapleau), but it is also among the things possible that it will be sustained by a larger majority than ever. It must be remembered that the adverse vote was on an incident in the course of debate and not on a question of policy. Under those circumstances the government does not consider itself called upon to resign." I quote the above from memory.

At the height of this histrionic stress there was a complete hush over the as-

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sembly; one could have heard the traditional pin drop in the chamber. The entire House listened with rapt attention. All necks craned towards the speaker. To the opposition who were eagerly awaiting the decision of the government it was nerve-racking. The sympathy of the occupants of the galleries swayed with the government. Several times they came near breaking out into a mad demonstration, but were deterred by the threat of the galleries being ordered cleared.

Irvine now assumed a certain breeziness of manner and dramatic vivacity of speech. Toying with a paper in one hand, casting an occasional waggish glance at Chapleau, and still with the inevitable broad and mirthless smile on his face, he proceeded: "I hold in my hand a resolution which I wish to submit to this honorable house. It runs as follows: "That this House approves the economical policies of the government and has complete confidence, etc." This resolution was carried amid much applause by a majority of four votes. In the solution of this snarl, as well as many others, Irvine gave proof that he was a Saul among the politicians of his day. When Chapleau became Prime Minister he hastened to shelve Irvine by giving him the Judgeship of the Admiralty Court. He was a disappointed man, with many unfulfilled aspirations through the jealousy of rivals. His admirers greatly regretted his act, for they believed more signal honors awaited him in politics. Even to this day, among the legal lights and politicians of Quebec, his name awakens throbs of interest, and they often repeat anecdotes and incidents in which he figured, proclaiming him a man of exceptional and remarkable

parts and a phenomenally astute lawyer and politician.

I was Irvine's family physician for many years, in the old days, and my relations—personal and professional—with him were of the pleasantest. I never think of him even to-day without the kindest feelings welling up in my heart. The last time I saw Irvine was in July, 1896, I believe, when I was on a visit from Boston to this city. I was pained to notice the lines of care and age and worry about his face; and the twin sun centres of the grey-blue eyes lacked their former keenness. His speculative mining ventures which have since prospered wonderfully, were then a heavy load to carry. When the wheel of fortune turned, it was too late for him to profit by it. His mind, however, was still alert and bright. It was at the Garrison Club I met him, and when I referred to the memorable evening in the House which I have attempted to describe above, I noticed quiet twinkles in his eyes. Any allusion to the political contests and conflicts, the sparkling clashes and the sharp thrusts between him and his old enemy was like the smell of powder to an old war horse. His sands of life were then fast running out, and it was but a short time after our interview, on the 24th February following, that this very clever politician and juriconsult answered *Adsum* to the final roll call. Given a wider field and scope, George Irvine would have shone illustriously with the best talent of the Dominion. He had many admirers and some depreciators, but he was not a personality towards whom one could feel indifference! Few were more resourceful; he could make brilliant almost any event, and become its central figure!

Heroic Endurance and Patience of a Noble Historian

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FRANCIS PARKMAN visited Quebec frequently while preparing his remarkable series of volumes on French and English campaigns in North America. The object of his visits was mainly to search historical records, to study the routes taken by the rival forces and their Indian allies in these wars, to examine the battlefields and to familiarize himself with the scenes of the famous exploits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Parkman is well remembered in "ye Ancient City," and was a welcome guest in some of the homes of its prominent citizens. Twice he honored the writer by calling at his old residence in D'Aiguillon street, and met there some of the old coterie of friends. He also frequently visited Spencer Grange, whose genial host he highly esteemed and to whom he was indebted for many important historical data. Since those days, Time, great chronos, has wrought many changes and his sickle has severed many ties. Among those whom Parkman met then, at D'Aiguillon street, poor Faucher de Saint Maurice and Joseph Marmette have passed to unknown shores.

The historical works of Francis Parkman attract and fascinate and en-

rapture the reader. They arouse and stimulate one as much as the most exciting and spirited novel. The marvellous drama of the life and deeds of the people who figured conspicuously during two centuries in North America, he describes graphically and illuminatingly. He takes the romantic incidents and tragic blood-curdling events of those epochs, their glorious military feats and acts of prowess, their striking ecclesiastical personages, the long and perilous tramps through the forests, sieges, battles and conspiracies, the fiendish cruelties of the Indians and their acts of treachery, in all their brutal and appalling nakedness, and uses them for the background of his historical pictures. He does this with such skillful artistry that they stand out in clear relief, defiling before our eyes, in endless procession, in all their significance and import. The realism is impressive and enthralling. We hear the clashing of swords, the rattle of musketry and the boom of the canon, resounding through his pages. Indeed the ghosts of the past come trooping and eddying about the reader, laden with the atmosphere of those days. In fine through the magic of his pen he gives life to the momentous phases of the border warfare of two centuries; he causes to flare forth gorgeously the beautiful, picturesque

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scenery of Canada and the United States, and the endless panorama of soldiery marching back and forth throughout both countries, with glimpses of the pageantry of those days. His displays of intellectual resources take many and varied forms of literary expression and always with a remarkable technical skill and temperamental power. Truly he is a past-master in the artistry of words. Incidents that had almost vanished with the dust and mists of centuries he resuscitated, and he illuminated the trodden paths of others with newer and richer lights.

All his writings bear the imprint of strong mentality; his characters are drawn with fidelity and discrimination and his historical facts unimpeachable. The details are handled with great grace and powerful and felicitous diction, and much erudition. He wrote sympathetically and appreciatively of the charms and attractions of old Stadacona and Canada generally. His erudition was varied and felicitous; he carried it as lightly as the flower he used to wear in the lapel of his coat, and like it, it shed a distinctive, pleasing fragrance. His unassuming wisdom, his quiet modesty, his never-failing good sense, his open-mindedness, his kindness and humanity, were striking features in his make-up. A kindlier, more amiable or more urbane gentleman I have seldom met. In truth his intellectual gifts were only excelled by the charm of his personality and his character as a man.

Parkman has left the intellectual world a legacy that time will account as more noble, more enduring than any material monument which could have been erected to his memory, although Boston has raised one in one of its public parks. Canada owes a great debt of gratitude to this noble and

highly gifted historian. His books on the colonial border warfare of both countries will exist in popular esteem as long as interest in such matters holds sway over human life. He has exercised and will continue to exercise the deepest influence over writers on both sides of the line.

During the writer's residence in Boston he was the recipient of flattering and courteous attentions from Parkman, both at his Boston home and at his delightful residence at Jamaica Plain, the memory of which to-day is genuine pleasure. The courtly dignity and grace of his acts are still vividly present in the writer's mind. Parkman rendered him a service about a year after his arrival in "The Hub of the universe." He called one day at the Hotel Vendôme, and in the course of conversation asked: "Why did you not follow your article of a few months ago, in the North American Review, with a sequel? The agitation going on in Canada at this moment, is an excellent theme for a second paper, on the same lines with your first!" (The question of the Annexation of Canada to the United States was being revived just then). The writer answered: "I anticipated your suggestion a few months ago, but my contribution was declined." Parkman's reply was: "Your article may not have been considered timely just then. Send it again to the same editor and let me know its fate." This advice was followed, without a word of alteration in the Ms. and the article was sent in absolutely the same condition as when refused. Not ten days later a cheque for fifty dollars was received from the North American Review magazine. This is mentioned more especially as an instance of a singular experience in the life of a literary man.

Our distinguished historian sounded

physical distress to the heart's depths. His was a tragic fate forged upon the anvil of great sufferings and torture. It seems incredible that works of such high standard, such exceptional qualities of style and diction, and such reliable historical value, could have been written by one, who, from the very outset of his literary career (in 1844) became afflicted with troubles which entailed great suffering, repeatedly threatened nervous prostration, and even loss of sight. At one time insanity itself was feared, through the tortures he endured. In spite of this and other infirmities, he struggled steadily and perseveringly to accomplish the task he had undertaken of writing the history of the conflicts between French and English that ended with the conquest of Canada. This he had the satisfaction of finally completing, to the delight of his friends and admirers, and to the advantage of the literary world.

Parkman was a man of great personal energy and activity, always wanting to be on the move. Rest was intolerable to him. During the attacks of severe pain to which he was subject, he was impelled to persistent physical efforts. As he often carried them to excess, they were followed by exhaustion and aggravation of his sufferings. On this point Dr. George Ellis says: "His maladies intensified his impulses to physical and mental exertion, while they limited the hours he could wisely give to reading and writing."

Farnham, who wrote a clever biography of Parkman, gives these details: "The extent of his sufferings is nowhere revealed, only hinted at, in writing; he is remembered, however, by an intimate friend or two, to have said that death would often have been a welcome end to his trials. . . . Once, when his physician, during a bad at-

tack, encouraged him by saying that he had a strong constitution, Parkman replied quaintly: "I'm afraid I have" . . . Sometimes, however, he felt so strongly that he had more than his share of trouble caused him to explode in a few very forcible expressions; then his quiet patience soon regained the mastery." After many years of agonizing sufferings he had attained almost a savage's endurance of pain; but what a nerve-racking life!

In a letter Parkman says: "I can bear witness that no amount of physical pain is so intolerable as the position of being stranded and doomed to lie rotting year after year. However, I have not yet abandoned any plan which I ever formed, and I have no intention of ever abandoning any." This is grit of the true ring. From such strains of stress and spells of gloom, he would rise again into the sunlight from the darkness, and be cheerful, and charming and as interesting as ever.

Farnham says, referring to the spring of 1848: "The difficulties were threefold: an extreme weakness of sight, disabling him even from writing his name, except with eyes closed; a condition of the brain prohibiting fixed attention, except at occasional and brief intervals; and an exhaustion and total derangement of the nervous system producing a mood of mind most unfavorable to efforts. To be made with impunity, the attempts must be made with the most watchful caution."

Parkman would read one minute at a time, rest one minute by looking at distant objects, begin again for another minute, and after the same interval of rest would start afresh. He would do this for a half hour at a time, twice or three times a day, and this only when

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he was feeling better than usual. If he ever overstepped this limited boundary, at once it resulted in a heightening of cerebrate and nervous reflexes, with concomitant pains. He devised a gridiron to facilitate his writing: "He caused a wooden frame to be constructed of the size and shape of a sheet of letter paper. Stout wires were fixed horizontally across it, half an inch apart, and a moveable back of thick pasteboard behind them. The paper for writing was placed between the pasteboard and the wires, guided by which, and using a black lead crayon, he could write, not illegibly, with closed eyes." Some days he would succeed in penning five or six lines, which others would decipher afterwards. This is one of the most heroic and pathetic experiences which history offers and the saddest thing of all is that Dr. Gould now maintains, and with truth: "If Parkman had lived at the present time he could have found relief from his disability and suffering in the same way that thousands of

others have done." The pity of it all twists one's heart strings! Carlyle was a parallel case, but his eye trouble affected the organs of digestion and caused him to be extremely irritable. Through the use of glasses his general churlishness and hatefulness of disposition might have been transformed into a sweet and urbane disposition. Alas!

When one afflicted as Parkman was—a reflex ocular-neurosis, or eye strain caused by deficient, accommodative power—he may be relieved and generally cured by the wearing of proper glasses. In any case when presbyopia becomes completed, which generally happens at the age of sixty or thereabouts, ease and comfort comes to the sufferer. This is what finally happened to Parkman, and during the last few years of his life the gateway unto rest was unlocked. On the 8th November, 1893, he left the world quietly to enter an illustrious grave and the enduring peace of the beyond.

