

CHAPTER XIX.

Literature in Canada before 1810.

The literature of all nations begins with poetry, or, at least, with versification, and is generally first introduced in the form of song. Such was the case amongst the Canadians. Their settlement on this side of the ocean is altogether confined to the period of 1633-1700, when books were scarce throughout Europe, especially in country places, and it is well known that Canada received only a few families from towns and cities at that time. Curiously enough, though, most of the women who came during those seventy years could read and write, and before thirty of them were here, they had a school open for girls. The men, as a rule, were indifferent in that connection.

The literary knowledge imported by this little group of toilers of the soil was composed of the popular current songs of the northern and western parts of France. They all loved to sing and play some kind of musical instrument. The fur trade started about the same date as colonization, and the *habitant*, or actual settler, soon got interested in the new life. The songs of old France were carried to the Great Lakes; they passed afterwards to the Mississippi and the North-West plains, and are still to be found wherever the French Canadians have penetrated through this continent—and where is the place where they are not at home in the whole of North America? The number of these poetical compositions is immense. One might think that if he knew all that came to his hand in the form of pamphlets, or flying sheets, he had nothing more to learn in that direction, but every week further search would bring to his knowledge a fresh supplement of a seemingly inexhaustible stock.

A people given to such culture may be expected to produce many works of merit, and to stamp them with its own peculiar mark, as, for instance, the characteristic traits belonging to a colony. We could here



Faithfully Yours
J. H. Drummond

mention what several high critics in modern France have said about the literary capacities of the French-Canadians, but these compliments only apply to the present writers, and the critics referred to have never read any Canadian productions previous to 1830.

We wish to draw attention first to the older period, that of 1764-1810, in the very infancy of the small literary world of Quebec. The germs that existed in the domain of the song-makers of the 17th and 18th centuries have developed into flourishing trees (with some shrubs of lesser degree) and marked the literary field from the time of the British conquest.

Even before the conquest the ground was prepared for studies and literary displays. Beauharnois, Hocquart, La Galissonnière, from 1725 to 1750, kept the elite of the colony well posted upon certain contemporary works and a small number of individuals had a library each composed of books suitable to their taste and surroundings. Poems were written and circulated in manuscript for want of a printing office, and most of them were, no doubt, lost for the same reason. We may mention the compositions of Abbé Etienne Marchand and of Jean Taché (1736) as the master-pieces of that period.

The first printing establishment in the Province of Quebec was that of the *Gazette de Quebec*, English and French, 1764, but neither the French nor the English population made use of it, at first, for literary purposes. The early publications of that paper bore strictly on topics of immediate interest, such as the "Cases of Canadians at Montreal, distressed by fire on the 18th of May, 1765"; *Cote chisme du diocèse de Sens*; prayer-books and alphabets printed for Father Labrosse, 1766-67; trial of Daniel Disney, 1767; a compendium of laws concerning the religious communities, 1768; observations of J. F. Cugnet on the proposed plan of F. Masères for a new constitution, 1771; *Lettres sur la ville de Québec*, 1774; and many others, but not in the line of literature properly speaking.

Frances Brook, the wife of a chaplain of the troops, resided for some years in Canada, and, in 1769, published (London) a novel in 4 vols. 12 mo., entitled *The History of Emily Montague*, in which there is a "racy description of Canadian scenery, a most romantic account of colonial court-

ship, flirtations, etc. The reader is initiated into Quebec society as it existed in the good olden time." (*Brit. Can. Rev.*, Quebec.) The work is composed of letters and cannot properly be called a novel. It is all through an evident effort to describe Canada and Canadian life. We must add that it was well received by the public.

Francis Masères, in his several volumes, printed in London, 1772, 1773, 1775, 1776, 1777, brought to light an abundance of information concerning the laws, customs, etc., of the colony, and if his personal opinions or prejudices are set aside, he accomplished a useful work. Born in London, he was the descendant of a Huguenot who had left France in 1686, or thereabout, on account of the religious persecution. From 1766 to 1769 he was attorney-general of the Province of Quebec, and on his return to England acted as agent for the Protestant settlers in the colony. He was *Cursitor Baron* of the Exchequer in England from 1773 till his death in 1824, at the age of 93 years.

In Montreal, Fleury Mesplet had started a printing office in 1776, but confined himself at first to the publication of religious books—one of them a compilation of sacred songs being rather curious—he did not attempt the newspaper form of publication until 1778, when he founded the *Gazette*, half English, half French—still in existence in English. Quebec had a *Cercle Littéraire*, so called, but it must have been a reading room. Anyway, it was a beginning. Mesplet admitted political communication into his *Gazette commerciale et littéraire* which title was soon changed into that of *Gazette littéraire*, and was really such, notwithstanding the bickerings and scoldings indulged in now and again by Valentin Jautard, a Parisian, imported by the American party of Montreal. This man failed to succeed politically, but contributed to the development of literature by his writings, these productions he inserted in the *Gazette*, whilst Mesplet printed books, pamphlets, etc., and had besides a book store open to the public.* An article published in June, 1779, under the title of *Tant pis, tant mieux*, brought Mesplet and Jautard into difficulty with Haldimand, who put them in gaol and kept them there for a couple of years. The almanac issued by Mesplet in 1783 is styled by him *curieux et intéressant*. He also re-

*See Royal Society of Canada, 1906, II. 224.

printed comedies, religious tracts, a description of a certain disease prevailing at Baie St. Paul, sometime a tragedy, a philosophical work, a commentary on the militia system, at least forty publications still to be found with collectors of books, and in all, according to the lists we have of them, seventy-seven different volumes.

We must not forget *Appel à la Justice* by Pierre Ducaulvet, which is a criticism of the administration of the colony, rather personal, not always clear enough, somewhat prolix also, but an invaluable record of certain facts connected with the state of Canada during the American revolution.

A public library was opened at Quebec in 1785—a serious undertaking as we may imagine—and was maintained for a long series of years. In 1788 James Tanswell started *Le Courrier de Quebec*, but only issued two numbers of that publication. Mesplet, in Montreal, was more successful, and his *Gazette* was then in its tenth year of existence.

Dramatic associations existed also in Quebec and Montreal. They played Molière and some light comedies of the time of Louis XV. The man who seems to have principally inspired these efforts was Joseph Quesnel, a poet, a musician and a person of good society. His comedy *Colas et Colinette*, became the great attraction of the day in Montreal (1790), whilst the people of Quebec boasted of a troop of amateurs who could not be surpassed in any colony, as they believed. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent, accompanied by Lieut.-Governors Clark and Simcoe, attended the performance of *La Comtesse d'Escarbagna* and *Le Médecin malgré lui*, in Quebec, on the 18th February, 1792. The prince felt quite at home amongst the lively Quebecers. At the banquet given in his honour, 29th December, 1791, he heard several songs composed for the occasion and which MM. Baby and Amiot rendered in the most happy manner.

The following list is very meagre compared with what could be shown if we were to exhaust the subject, but it gives an idea of the variety of volumes and pamphlets printed in Canada during the first half century of the British government:—

1767. The trial of Daniel Disney charged . . . for cutting off the right ear of Thomas Walker on the night of December 6th, 1764.

1772. Things necessary to be settled in the Province of Quebec.

1783. Capitulations and extracts of treaties relating to Canada, with His Majesty's proclamation of 1763.

1784. Paper read at the bar of the House of Commons by Mr. Lymburner, agent for the subscribers to the petition from the Province of Quebec.

1786. Sermon preached by the Reverend John Doty at the opening of Christ's Church at Sorel, on the 25th day of December, 1785.

1790. Defence on behalf of Messrs. John Walter, George Irwin, and John Jones, on a prosecution for a libel, at the instance of Henry Caldwell.

Letter of the Bishop of Capsa, co-adjutor of Quebec, on education.

Papers and letters on agriculture. Recommended to the attention of the Canadian farmers by the Agricultural Society in Canada.

Report of a committee of the council on the subject of promoting the means of education.

1791. Ancient French Archives . . . under the government of France.

Oration delivered by the Reverend Alexander Spark at the dedication of the Free Masons' Hall, Quebec.

1792. Extracts of examples of the proceedings of the House of Commons—English and French text.

1793. Laws of Lower Canada under the constitution of 1791.

Rules and regulations of the House of Assembly, Lower Canada.

1795. Abstract from an Act of the Provincial Parliament relative to highways and bridges.

1796. Order of the governor-in-council for the regulation of commerce between this province and the United States.

Treaty of amity, commerce and navigation between His Britannic Majesty and the United States, signed 19th November, 1794.

1797. Trial of David McLane for high treason. . . . Taken in shorthand at the trial.

1798. Minute of council relative to the waste lands of the Crown.

1799. The union of taste and science—a poem, by Stephen Dickson.

His Majesty's squadron, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir H.

Nelson, K.B., from its sailing from Gibraltar, to the conclusion of the glorious victory of the Nile.

Sermon preached at Quebec by Jacob, Lord Bishop of Quebec, on the day appointed for a general thanksgiving, January 10th, 1799. This has reference to the battle of the Nile.

Discours à l'occasion . . . de la même bataille, prononcé le 10 janvier, 1799, par messire J. O. Plessis, curé de Québec.

1800. Collection of the Acts passed in the Parliament of Great Britain, and other public Acts relative to Canada.

1804. Sermon preached by the Reverend Alexander Sparks in the Scotch Presbyterian Church at Quebec on 1st February, 1804, the day appointed by proclamation for a general fast.

1806. Canada, a descriptive poem, with satires, imitations and sonnets, written at Quebec, 1805.

Remarks on the culture and preparation of hemp in Canada, by Charles Taylor, M.D., secretary to the Society for Encouragement of Arts, etc., in London.

1808. Bill introduced in the House of Assembly to incorporate a bank in Lower Canada.

1810. Some considerations on the question: Whether the British government acted wisely in granting to Canada her present constitution. By John Fleming.

From 1764 to 1795 no less than thirty works of public importance were printed in the Province of Quebec, and about ten others in London, written by Canadians, some by English-speaking authors. These figures may be considered inconsiderable; we wonder if it is any better in our own days, considering the increase of population. The sciences proper were much neglected, and continued to be so for fifty years afterwards.

Contrary to what is generally believed, books were not unknown to the Canadians during the second half of the 18th century. It is stated on fair authority that there were at least 60,000 volumes in the private libraries about the year 1765, all French, of course, and many others were received after that date; so that it may be said that there was one volume for every soul of the population, an average superior to what we have now.

Any one conversant with the habits of the best families of the period in question understand readily that these people were educated, not only in manners and outward politeness and appearance; but equally by reading and *causerie de salon* which is so thoroughly French—a great school for learning what you cannot gather from books. The literature of the reign of Louis XIV. and XV. (1660-1760), composed the main elements of a Canadian library at the end of the 18th century. Its influence is visible on every page written in those days, either for the public press or in private letters. We know nearly all the books then to be found in Canada, because a great many of them have been preserved by the descendants of the owners and handed down to our time.

Learning being thus concentrated in the higher classes, these acted as leaders for the bulk of the population and the authorities looked for opinion in all matters concerning the public good. It is hard to imagine what would have been the history of Canada without those aristocratic circles, for the peasants left to themselves, would, in their ignorance, have listened to American and French emissaries, the same as the poor Acadians had done from 1713 to 1754, being deprived of the advantage of a higher class of men belonging to their own stock. No wonder, therefore, that Murray, Cramahé, Carleton, Haldimand, Hamilton, Hope, Clark and Prescott paid so great attention to the sentiments of the gentry, and that their actions were guided by them in their efforts to ensure security.

William Smith, who lived at Quebec in 1785, says that a public library was established there in that year, and that the books came from London. La Rochefoucauld (1795) observes that the only library of that kind in Lower Canada was at Quebec: "It is a small gathering of books nearly all French, sustained by subscription. We are rather puzzled at the choice of some of them, knowing as we do, the political dispositions of the directors of that institution, for it contains the printed papers of the National Assembly of France." As late as 1824, Vassal de Monviel speaks of interesting studies made by him in the Quebec library, which is supposed to be either that of 1785 or the one belonging to the legislature.

At the outbreak of the revolution (1789) a movement was noticeable amongst the politicians in France to favour "the English system of govern-

ment''; in other words, the constitutional administration, but this could not be made clear to the masses, unless some written explanation were furnished. A Swiss lawyer by the name of Jean-Louis Delolme seems to have sounded the correct note by anticipation, as his book, *Constitution de l'Angleterre*, had been printed at Amsterdam in 1771 and become classical at its first edition. No sooner had a copy been received in Canada than the members of the legislative assembly (1792) turned their attention to that Alcoran, but as the session was drawing to an end, it was thought better to arrange for a series of meetings in Quebec, Three Rivers, Sorel, Chambly and Montreal where the members and their friends could be assembled by small detachments and initiated into the contents of the book of revelations, so to speak. This was done, and with good effect, inasmuch as it allowed some practical information to make its way into the heads of those who had never had any opportunity to study the mechanism of the British institutions.

There was a spirit of literature in the air. Canadian pamphlets could be seen in the hands of many who had never experienced that sort of pleasure before. *Papiers sur l'Angleterre* referred to the administration of the United Kingdom, and such reading was à propos of the new constitution (1791). A long letter from Bishop Bailly upon the necessity of a university gave rise to discussion and examination. *L'Ancienne et la Nouvelle Constitution du Canada* was another commentary of political importance, and indicating also that the Canadians were able to express their ideas before the world. *La Nouvelle Constitution de France* followed, and the whole province roused to listen to this expression of opinions. It contrasted strongly with the ancient fashion of looking upon propositions of that class with an evil eye, for the mind of the people had now taken a turn in the way, not only of discussions, but also of eagerness to appreciate the subjects and distinguish between theories, with a view to adopt anything that promised to better their political situation. It was a visible progress along the whole line. To crown the state of affairs came *Le Magasin de Québec*, a repertoire of literature and science. The *Quebec Gazette* also modified its old dull system and opened the door to several communications

concerning the questions of the day. This coincided with the creation of the *Upper Canada Gazette* published at Newark in 1790.

The spirit of the times would not find fault with an English-speaking man for saying harsh words against the government, but would consider as a crime the least complaint from a Canadian. The *Quebec Gazette*, for instance, clipped several articles from a Paris paper and inserted them, with all the "high tone" principles embodied therein, at an hour when the convention reigned supreme over France and committed the horrors we know of. Mesplet, with all his audacity, would not dare, and would not probably have been allowed, to carry the same articles in his pocket, and far less to publish them. Such was the spirit of the times. A member of the assembly summed up the situation in this way: "A Canadian must have the right on his side twice, and must show the evidence of it four times before getting a hearing from some quarters."

The Duke of La Rochefoucauld, who visited Upper Canada in 1795, says that the people there were not so eager for news as the inhabitants of the United States. "The only paper in the province is printed at Newark (by a Canadian), and the government covers three-quarters of its expenses for want of subscription from the public. It is a weekly sheet containing very short extracts from the New York and Albany publications, and all the views of Governor Simcoe. In brief, its usefulness is that of an official gazette." He adds that this paper had no subscriber in Kingston, but that the *Quebec Gazette* had two there!

The agitation which followed the discovery of the Genest scheme to drag the United States into a war with Great Britain was marked by various publications, but two only are known now: "Extracts from minutes of council containing His Majesty's late regulations, etc.," Quebec, 1798; and: "Avis au Canada à l'occasion de la crise importante actuelle," Quebec, 1798.

François-Joseph Cuget, the best French legist in the colony, published five or six treatises (1760-1789) concerning law matters. He had been councillor to the Superior Council under the French government, an office which he retained up to the capitulation of Montreal. As a legal authority he was unquestioned. As a Canadian born (1720) he was for "Canada

First." Governor Murray appointed him (1760) "lieutenant-général civil et criminel de la cour de Québec et pays conquis," consequently this must have taken place in January of that year, when Jacques Allier was appointed judge for the parishes of the south shore of the St. Lawrence below Point Levis. The introduction of English laws by the proclamation of 1763 removed him from the bench. He was made grand-voyer of the province, then called to the council where he rendered useful services. Cugnet is one of the principal Canadians who understood that the British regime was better than the French government, and his example had great weight.

William Vondenvelden, a French engineer, and Louis Charland, a Canadian, issued in concert a compilation, being a sequel to Cugnet.

The Reverend Dr. Jacob Mountain, first Anglican Bishop of Quebec—appointed 1793—wrote some remarkable letters (1798-1801) in which he proposed a plan of public education for all classes.

Justin McCarthy, an Irish lawyer who wrote in French, prepared an excellent dictionary of the old civil code of Canada (1809).

Jean-Antoine Bouthillier published an arithmetic for the schools.

The *Travels* of Isaac Weld through the provinces of Canada, published in London (2 vols., 1799) did more to "advertise" those colonies than any debate in the House of Commons on the same subject.

Joseph-François Perrault, a fine type of public-spirited Canadian of these years of transition, was the champion of elementary schools. "In contemplating the educational agitation in which Mr. Perrault was a valiant pioneer, we cannot trace a very deep line of division between the French and the English section of the population. The best men on both sides were earnest in desiring a sound system of public instruction, however they might differ as to methods. The Hon. James McGill may be mentioned as a parallel type in the English community."* Perrault published, in 1803, a treatise on Parliamentary practice, and a dictionary of the same nature; in 1813, a hand-book for bailiffs; in 1822, a course of elementary education; in 1824, extracts from the judgments of the prevotal court from 1727 to 1759; in 1830 a work on large and small agricultural pursuits; in 1831, a plan of general education; then closed his career by a history of Canada from the discovery.

*John Reade: *Canada—an Encyclopedia*, Toronto, V. 149.

The History of Canada, published in London, 1804, from the pen of George Heriot, deputy postmaster-general of British North America, though mainly a condensed version of Charlevoix, contains, in the second part, a detail of the lakes, rivers and cataracts, villages, farm houses and townships of the province which made it an attractive store of information to the inquiring student.

The men who first studied the history of this country, commented on the laws and Parliamentary practices, composed books for the schools, cultivated poetry and the current art of writing for the public press, deserve more gratitude from us than those who came after them and accomplished marvels, no doubt, but found the way open and new means of development already prepared.

As a rule, the *Quebec Gazette* refrained from attacking the Canadians and this was considered a lack of patriotic energy on the part of that paper by those who wished to keep up a lively skirmishing against the old population. The *Mercury* came to light in January, 1805, ready to open fire along the whole line of nationality. It soon found an occasion to satisfy its fancy. Pierre Bédard, the leader of the Canadians in the Assembly, laid a motion before the Speaker to enquire as to the author, printer, etc., of the *Montreal Gazette*, who had published a "false, scandalous and malicious libel, highly and unjustly reflecting upon His Majesty's representatives in this province." The *Gazette* had criticised bitterly the vote of certain members upon taxation. The editor and the printer were accordingly ordered to be taken into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms, but not being found by those who went to Montreal in quest of them, the matter was dropped. The *Mercury* then came to the front trying to discredit the party forming the majority of the legislative assembly, but on the serjeant-at-arms being sent to the editor, that gentleman apologized and was released. Later on, the house objected to another article from the same source, and Mr. Thomas Cary could not be found, because he had concealed himself in a secret room in his own residence, from whence he continued the fight in each number of the *Mercury*. M. Bédard finally saw that his action was a violation of the liberty of the press, and abandoned his proceedings.

A new political organ, *Le Canadien*, was launched at Quebec, in Novem-

ber, 1806, with a full programme of constitutional government. This paper contained a series of historical documents referring to Canada, which opened a new phase in the journalism of the province, and also numerous original literary productions. The *Mercury* attacked this neighbour, and they had a long spell of cross-firing on the administration of public affairs. In literature, *Le Canadien* did very well, besides serving his adversary with hot shots to good effect. It is clear that its contributors were men of knowledge and gifted with talent. From that moment the French writers of Canada have always formed an active and capable group, and their development has been a prominent fact until the present day. Two or three of the inspirers of *Le Canadien* were rather witty, "light-headed men," said the *Mercury*:

"With goose-quill armed, instead of spear."

Epigrams of all sorts flashed on both sides for many months. This was a literary exercise that must have been afforded the young writers of the period a chance to test their natural resources. In matters of history nothing is small, and the least circumstances are often productive of surprising results. Songs were put in circulation, some of them reflecting on the attitude of the Americans in regard to Canada, for there was a belief all round that the diplomatic difficulty then existing could not be settled except by war. We may here mention a book published at Quebec early in 1812, entitled: "Resources of the Canadas, or sketches of the physical and moral means which Great Britain and her colonial authorities will successfully employ in securing these valuable provinces from open invasion and invidious aggression on the part of the government of the United States of America," by a Querist.

There was also a Canadian party, called by their opponents "the office seekers," or bureaucrats, which aimed to participate in the government patronage. They started a paper, *Le Courrier de Québec*, in January, 1807, with Dr. Jacques Labrie as chief editor. Labrie had been educated in Canada; afterwards he had studied medicine in Edinburgh, and he was greatly interested in matters concerning the history of Canada. His paper opposed *Le Canadien* firmly in politics, and also published several documents relating to the previous thirty years, in connection with this country.

Labrie made his mark in the circle of those who were given to literary and historical pursuits.

From the conflict of interest between the *Mercury*, *Canadien*, and *Courrier*, sprang the practice of advertising the merchants' goods, which the *Quebec Gazette* had always neglected. This is another form of literature not likely to perish for want of substance, although it was quite unknown to our forefathers.

When *Le Courrier* died (June, 1807), *Le Canadien* expressed much regret at its departure, stating, in a sarcastic manner, that the best enemy it could have had was a badly written paper. The *Mercury* was delighted; it said the defunct looked like a parent of *Le Canadien*. In all this squabble many young men handled the pen for the first time and acquired a practical understanding of the art of putting their thoughts in black and white. This was really the incipient school of this kind in Canada.

Some debating clubs existed in the meantime, where such personalities as Louis-Joseph Papineau, Debartzch, Bourdages and others gained juvenile fame before coming out openly as public men. Dr. Labrie gave an impetus to the study of the history of Canada. So did George Heriot, in his work published during these years. The Montreal press helped a great deal in that direction by the writing of Viger, Bibaud, Mermet, St. George, etc. The literature of Canada was born by this time. John Lambert, who visited the country in 1806-1808, does not say much about this point, for he only saw the primitive situation of things and could not be expected to foresee the future. Here are his observations: "The state of literature and the arts did not improve very rapidly after the conquest. The traders and settlers who took up their abode amongst the French were ill-qualified to diffuse a taste for the arts and sciences, unless, indeed, it was the science of barter and the art of gaining cent per cent. upon their goods. For many years, no other work was printed in the colony than an almanac. . . . Of late years, the Canadians have appeared desirous of establishing some claim to a literary character. . . . The publishing of six newspapers weekly is a proof of the progressive improvement and prosperity of the country, though it may be but a fallacious system of literary improvement. Four of the newspapers are published in Quebec and two in Montreal. These, with

an almanac and the Acts of the Provincial Parliament, are all the works that are published in Lower Canada."

It is obvious that Lambert was unaware of other publications, such as school books, song books, treatises upon the land question, commentaries on laws, discussions of political and historical matters, and amateur theatricals, which, in a colony, are always a form of intellectual development worth mentioning.

The newspapers mentioned by Lambert were, in Montreal: the *Canadien Courant*, "by Nahum Mower, an American from the States"; the *Gazette*; in Quebec: the *Gazette*, *Mercury*, *Canadien*, *Courrier*. Of the latter he says: "This little paper is conducted by two or three young French Canadians for the purpose of inserting their fugitive pieces. These gentlemen have recently established a literary society, which, though it may not contain the talents of a national institute or a royal society is, notwithstanding, deserving of all the encouragement that can be given to it by the Canadian government. The first dawn of genius in such a country should be hailed with pleasure."

Lambert knows of but one public library in Canada, which is kept in one of the apartments of the Bishop's palace at Quebec. After some remarks on the general taste for novel reading among Canadian ladies he goes on to say that happily their temptations are few, as few new publications, good or bad, appear in Canada, and the book stores contain chiefly school books and some old histories.

"Mr. Lambert is not always correct, and what he says of libraries is not true of either Quebec or Montreal. In the latter a library was founded in 1796, which after passing through the hands of the Mercantile Library Association forms at present (1899) part of the collection in the Fraser Institute."*

The Montreal *Herald* was founded in 1808 by Mr. Mungo Kay, a merchant in that city, and it soon became "one of the most entertaining journals of the two provinces," said the *Montreal Gazette*, in 1818.

There was a meeting of the *Société Littéraire de Québec*, on the 3rd June, 1809, "to examine poems, both French and English, written in honour of King George III.'s Jubilee, in order to adjudge the prizes offered

*John Reade: *Canada: a Cyclopaedia*, V. 150.

by the Society. In presence of an audience composed of the intellectual élite of Quebec, M. Romain, the president, announced that, having examined the pieces submitted to it with the most scrupulous attention, the Literary Society consider that Mr. John Fleming, of Montreal, had written the best English poem, and the person who signed himself 'Canadensis' the best French poem. Now a prize poem of the year of grace 1809 ought to supply the key to the position of literature in Lower Canada in the days of the Regency. Here, therefore, is a brief portion of Mr. Fleming's ode on "The Birthday of His Majesty King George III." :—

Hail, joyful morn, ordained for social mirth,
 Auspicious morn that gave our sovereign birth!
 The muse of Canada thee humbly hails,
 Thy praise resounds through her sweet smiling vales.

As heavenly Phœbus cherishes the soil
 With ripening fruits rewarding mortals' toil,
 So George's fostering and paternal hand
 Dispenses blessings o'er our happy land.

Such was the advance attained by English literature in the Province of Quebec in the fiftieth year after the death of Wolfe. Not very much, it may be said, but still a beginning. Mr. Fleming, who was from Aberdeen, was at this time in his 25th year. He was a man of considerable taste and literary aspiration and, though an active man of business, amassed a library of 11,000 volumes, which it was his avowed intention to bequeath to McGill College. The cholera carried him off in 1832 before he had put his intention in writing, and in 1843 his fine collection was sold by auction. Mr. Fleming was the author of a work entitled *The Political Annals of Lower Canada*,** published first in the *Canadian Review* of Montreal, then in book form, 1828, "A work full of information as it is of prejudice against the French Canadians," said Pierre de Salles Laterrière, who published also *A Political Account of Lower Canada* (London), 1830.

*John Reade: *Canada—an Encyclopedia*, Toronto, V. 149.