Cameron of Lochiel

Philippe Aubert de Gaspé

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Transcriber's Notes

[oe] replaces the oe ligature

bold text: =equals signs=

small caps: +plus signs+

italic text: _underscores_

imflammable typo replaced with inflammable

musquitoes replaced with mosquitoes

dazzingly replaced with dazzlingly

Ææan replaced with Ægean

harrasses replaced with harasses

vail replaced with veil

seige replaced with siege

beseiged replaced with besieged

vengance replaced with vengeance

Acadie replaced with Acadia

Uncommon and inconsistent hyphenation and spelling have been retained; typographical errors have been corrected.

CAMERON OF LOCHIEL

Works of Charles G. D. Roberts

The Prisoner of Mademoiselle

The Watchers of the Trails

The Kindred of the Wild

The Heart of the Ancient Wood

Earth's Enigmas

Barbara Ladd

The Forge in the Forest
A Sister to Evangeline
By the Marshes of Minas
A History of Canada
The Book of the Rose
Poems
New York Nocturnes
The Book of the Native
In Divers Tones (_Out of print_)
Songs of the Common Day (_Out of print_)

Cameron of Lochiel

(_Translated from the French of Philippe Aubert de Gaspé_)

L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
New England Building
Boston, Mass.

Illustration: _Cameron of Lochiel._]

(_See page 68._)

CAMERON OF LOCHIEL

BY PHILIPPE AUBERT DE GASPÉ

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

NEW EDITION

With a frontispiece by
H. C. EDWARDS

BOSTON
L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
MDCCCCV

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(INCORPORATED)

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

This leisurely and loose-knit romance of de Gaspé's, which he called "Les Anciens Canadiens," has for hero one who was not a Canadian, but a Scotch exile sojourning in Canada. It is on the creation of this character, consistently developed and convincingly presented, that the book must mainly base its claim to be called a work of fiction, rather than a volume of memoirs and folklore. I have ventured, therefore, at the suggestion of my publishers, to take a liberty with the author's title, and name the story after this young Scotch exile, "Cameron of Lochiel." I am the more willing to take this liberty because I feel that de Gaspé has not hitherto been granted the place he is entitled to in the ranks of Canadian fictionists. Considered purely as a romance, it seems to me that the sincerity, simplicity, and originality of this work quite outweigh its sprawling looseness of structure, and make it one of the unique ornaments of the composite literature which we are building up in Canada. If by so changing its title as to emphasize the

fictional character of the work I can the better call attention to the worth of de Gaspé's achievement, I feel that I am justified, even in the face of such anticipatory protest as may seem to be implied in the author's too modest introduction.

When all this has been said, however, the fact remains that it was not its many merits as a romance that induced me to translate this work, but the riches of Canadian tradition, folk-lore, and perished customs embalmed in the clear amber of its narrative, coupled with my own anxiety to contribute, in however humble a way, to the increase of understanding and confidence between the two great branches of the Canadian people. It is a beautiful and gracious life, that of old French Canada, as depicted in de Gaspé's lucent pages,--a life of high ideals, and family devotion, and chivalry, and courage. This is an atmosphere it is wholesome to breathe. These are people it is excellent to know; and the whole influence of the story makes for trust and a good understanding.

C. G. D. R.

+Fredericton, N. B.+, _May, 1905_.

PREFACE.

In Canada there is settling into shape a nation of two races; there is springing into existence, at the same time, a literature in two languages. In the matter of strength and stamina there is no overwhelming disparity between the two races. The two languages are admittedly those to which belong the supreme literary

achievements of the modern world. In this dual character of the Canadian people and the Canadian literature there is afforded a series of problems which the future will be taxed to solve. To make any intelligent forecast as to the solution is hardly possible without a fair comprehension of the two races as they appear at the point of contact. We, of English speech, turn naturally to French-Canadian literature for knowledge of the French-Canadian people. The romance before us, while intended for those who read to be entertained, and by no means weighted down with didactic purpose, succeeds in throwing, by its faithful depictions of life and sentiment among the early French Canadians, a strong side-light upon the motives and aspirations of the race.

In spite of the disclaimer with which the author begins, the romance of Les Anciens Canadiens is a classic. From the literary point of view it is markedly the best historical romance so far produced in French Canada. It gathers up and preserves in lasting form the songs and legends, the characteristic customs, the phases of thought and feeling, the very local and personal aroma of a rapidly changing civilization. Much of what de Gaspé has so vividly painted from his boyish reminiscences had faded out of the life upon which his alert eyes rested in old age. The origin of the romance, as given by his biographer, the Abbé Casgrain, is as follows:

When, in 1861, that patriotic French-Canadian publication the _Soirées Canadiennes_ was established, its inaugurators adopted as their motto the words: "Let us make haste to write down the stories and traditions of the people, before they are forgotten." M. de Gaspé was struck with the idea; and seeing that the writers who were setting themselves the laudable task were all young men, he took the words

as a summons to his old age, and so the book came to be written.

Patriotism, devotion to the French-Canadian nationality, a just pride of race, and a loving memory for his people's romantic and heroic past--these are the dominant chords which are struck throughout the story. Of special significance, therefore, are the words which are put in the mouth of the old seigneur as he bids his son a last farewell. The father has been almost ruined by the conquest. The son has left the French army and taken the oath of allegiance to the English crown. "Serve thy new sovereign," says the dying soldier, "as faithfully as I have served the King of France; and may God bless thee, my dear son!"

In the present day, when nationalism in Quebec appears rather given to extravagant dreams, it would be well for the distant observer to view the French Canadians through the faithful medium which de Gaspé's work affords him. Under constitutional forms of government it is inevitable that a vigorous and homogeneous minority, whose language and institutions are more or less threatened by the mere preponderance of the dominant race, should seem at times overvehement in its self-assertion. A closer knowledge leads us to conclude that perhaps the extreme of Quebec nationalism is but the froth on the surface of a not unworthy determination to keep intact the speech and institutions of French Canada. However this may be, it is certain that the point of contact between the two races in Canada is at the present day as rich a field for the romancer as de Gaspé found it at the close of the _old régime_.

According to the Histoire de la littérature Canadienne of Edmond Lareau, Philippe Aubert de Gaspé was born in Quebec on the 30th of

October, 1786. He died in 1871. He belonged to a noble French-Canadian family. At the manor of St. Jean-Port-Joli, of which he was seigneur, he passed a large part of his life; and there he laid the chief scenes of his great romance. He was educated at the seminary of Quebec, and then studied law in the city, under Sewell, afterward chief-justice. Only for a few years, however, did he devote himself to his profession--one from which so many a poet and man of letters has broken loose. He accepted the position of sheriff of Quebec, and afterward came misfortunes which Lareau passes over with sympathetic haste. His lavish generosity to his friends and the financial embarrassments into which he fell, his four years' confinement in the debtors' prison, his sufferings of soul and body, all doubtless contributed to the poignant coloring with which he has painted the misfortunes of M. d'Egmont, _le bon gentilhomme_. On his release from prison he retired to his estate of St. Jean-Port-Joli, but not to the solitude and benevolent melancholy of D'Egmont. The romancer was of too sunny a disposition, he was too genuine and tolerant a lover of his kind, to run much risk of becoming a recluse. A keynote to his nature may be found in the bright _Bonsoir la compagnie_ with which, in the words of an old French-Canadian song, he closed his literary labors at the age of seventy-nine, when the last page of the Mémoires was completed.

The story we have translated, under the title of The Canadians of Old, was published in 1862. It is accompanied in the original by a mass of curious information, in the shape of notes and _addenda_, such as would hardly interest the general reader. They will more than repay, however, the attention of any one who wishes to study the French-Canadian people as they were in their early days. The story

itself has the air of being the product of a happy leisure. The style is quaint and unhurried, with no fear of the printer's devil before its eyes. The stream of the narrative, while swift enough and direct enough at need, is taught to digress into fascinating cross-channels of highly colored local tradition, or to linger felicitously in eddies of feast and song.

The work begun in Les Anciens Canadiens De Gaspé carried to completion in his second and last composition, the Mémoires, published in 1866. As the former work is a vivid epitome of life at the _seigneuries_ and among the _habitants_ of those days, so the latter reproduces and fixes for us the picturesque effects of life in the city of Quebec itself in the generation or two succeeding the conquest--a period during which the French-Canadian _noblesse_ yet maintained, about the person of the English governor, something of the remembered splendor of the old vice-regal court.

C. G. D. R.

Windsor, Nova Scotia, 1890.

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