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ROMANTICISM IN THE EARLY FRENCH CANADIAN LITERATURE

especially in
the Quebec School)

A Thesis presented

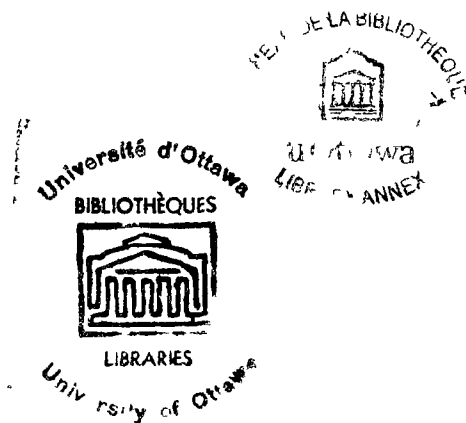
by

Sister Saint Carola)

As partial requirement
for the degree of
Master of Arts

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Le Romantisme est surtout la
nostalgie de Dieu sensible au
coeur." R. P. Armand de la
Croix-Laval.

Chapter I Introduction.

"Le Romantisme est surtoit la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur. " R. P. Armand de la Croix-Laval.

To the amateur in the vast field of literature, it is certainly consoling to realize that even those whose names shine in Parnassian splendour are not fully agreed on how romanticism, or even poetry itself, should be defined. Since so many opinions are prevalent, one is free to make a choice and to consider such a definition as fundamental in the work herein undertaken.

"En Feuilletant nos Ecrivains" contains the history of the struggle undertaken to define romanticism. Among the many versions given, one stands out clarifying to a great extent the definition of the much abused term - - Romanticism. The following quotation reveals the judicious finding of Reverend Father Armand de la Croix-Laval:

"Le romantisme a en quelque sorte, deux faces dont l'une réfléchit la terre et l'autre le ciel. La première ne peut se soustraire à l'analyse et ainsi le romantisme apparait tout d'abord aux yeux des critiques unanimes en l'occurrence, comme la réaction contre le classicisme. Mais l'autre, tourné du côté du ciel, devient quasi inaccessible à la critique.....Lorsqu'on envisage le problème sous cet aspect, on éprouve peu d'hésitation à se ranger du côté du R. P. Armand de la Croix-Laval, jésuite, qui voulait close définitivement le

débat avec sa judicieuse remarque: 'Il semble bien que la critique Catholique soit en droit de voir dans le romantisme surtout la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur!' " 1

Further, the above-mentioned author continues:

"Plus explicite et plus catégorique est l'affirmation de Mgr. Camille Roy: 'L'on sait quelle parenté étroite il y a entre le sentiment religieux et celui de la nature, comment ils s'augmentent l'un par l'autre et que c'est pour cette raison que la poésie romantique, qui est à base d'impressions suggérées par la nature, fut aussi essentiellement religieuse. Le romantisme eut à vrai dire, sa source la plus jaillissante dans ce besoin du divin qui tourmente le coeur de l'homme.' Mgr. C. Roy présentait, car ce jugement fut porté en 1923 la définition que propose dans les Etudes en 1924, le R. P. Armand de la Croix-Laval: le romantisme est surtout la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur. "1

There are then, two kinds of romanticism:

that of Rousseau, a romanticism of weakness, of immorality, of paganism, and that defined above as Catholic, a romanticism which offers an outlet to man's gnawing need of God, a romanticism which is the outpouring of a soul seeking God, whether that seeking be conscious or unconscious. In this work, there is question only of the second kind. Let us lay down here the object of this study in terms definite enough to sustain the argument which follows, namely, that in early French Canadian poetry, and more especially in that group known as the School of Quebec, there is strong evidence of this Catholic romanticism, that these first native poets

1. MARION, Seraphin, En Feulletant nos Ecrivains, p. 209

were more romanticist than classicist and that they would naturally have written romantic poetry even without the influence of the mother country.

There is no question here of showing the influence of French romanticism on our early French Canadian poets -- that influence is an admitted fact. Human nature being what it is, there is bound to be, in literature as elsewhere, a certain amount of imitation. Jean Charbonneau puts it well when he writes:

"L'esprit d'imitation est intuitif dans la nature; il est inhérent à l'imagination humaine... Qui pourrait prétendre qu'une oeuvre est, en quelque pays du monde, à l'heure actuelle, entièrement originale et foncièrement elle-même?" 1

If France herself was influenced by the German and English schools of romantic poetry, how much more easily would her colonies adopt the literature she fed out to them? At any rate, a detailed study of the influence has been made by several authors and critics. Among them is Laurence Bisson, with "Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada Français". In the preface, the author states:

"Notre but a été de montrer aussi nettement que possible en analysant l'oeuvre des auteurs les plus célèbres, jusqu'à quel degré ils ont subi l'influence de leurs maîtres français en ce qui concerne le fond et la forme." 2

Despite his closely drawn parallels between French and

-
1. CHARBONNEAU, Jean, Des Influences Françaises au Canada, Tome 1, p. 31-33
 2. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada Français, Avant-propos. p. 10

French-Canadian poets and his minutiae of examples showing how such and such a Canadian poet copied Hugo, Lamartine, de Musset and Sully Prudhomme, the author frequently finds himself unable to make all the comparisons he wishes and is obliged to admit that frequently Canadian romanticism is original, at least in its idea (fond) even when the accepted form was used. In the concluding paragraph, the author states:

"Nous avons amplement établie l'existence de l'influence romantique sur la littérature Canadienne, nous pouvons même affermir que pendant la plus grande partie du XIXe siècle, cette littérature est essentiellement romantique et que sans cette impulsion venue de la mère patrie, elle n'aurait jamais existé."¹

Such a conclusion cannot be drawn from such a study--one based purely on comparison of words, types of structure, length of verses, uses of certain figures peculiar not only to two schools of romantic poetry, but to a language used by both. That French Canadian literature should adopt the forms of poetry in vogue in France at that time is certainly natural since the first Canadian poets had no other masters to follow and as novices in the literary field, were not in a position to establish new types of poems, but the poetic heart of young French Canadian literature would certainly have existed and would have sung out its joy,

1. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada Français. p. 256

its love, its grief and pain in verse, without the influence of France or any other country. Let us repeat; in this study, it is our ambition to show that our French Canadian literary ancestors were of the school of Catholic romanticism, that their "je ne sais quoi d'inspiré" could be nothing else but romantic, even without knowing its name, or its definition, or the battle waged in its honour.

Here are the reasons which lead us to accept such a belief. In Canada there existed for the pioneer school, that 'exotique' which inspired the first of French Romanticists, Chateaubriand. He, himself, found the object of his search in the forests, in the virgin, savage land of America. How much more so then, would our Canadian ancestors, living so close to nature, find inspiration in our native beauty, they who feasted their eyes and hearts on this beauty untouched and chaste as it came from the Hands of the Creator, how much more strongly influenced would they be in their proximity and daily contact than Chateaubriand who merely passed through this glorious maze?

French Canada has moreover always been essentially Catholic and strongly Christian. Its ancestors have been people of firm, simple faith. For this very

reason, the poetry of our early schools could not be that of a pantheist and their nostalgia, their 'cris du coeur', would be born naturally, out of their ardent desire to know, love, and enjoy to a greater extent, this God of all nature--their faith would lead them well beyond the gift to the Giver. Hence, there is no place for Lamartinian melancholy and Hugolian desolation. This Canadian romanticism is that of souls absorbed in the beauty of a God, Author of this beauty which surrounds them, charms their daily lives, intoxicates them with joy and makes them seek to establish homes, to nestle down as it were, as close to nature as possible in order that their lives be more full of it. Is it surprising then that our poets should be more romanticist than classicist?

Since nostalgia and romanticism become almost synonymous, it is by their very nostalgia that our first French Canadian poets were romanticists. 'Nos coeurs sont à France' will remain ever written in French Canadian hearts as 'Calais' was imprinted in that of the English queen, but for different reasons. This longing for the mother country inspired much of the early poetry but with it there arose a more lofty loneliness--the longing for a more beautiful land where separation, exiles, discord and suffering would no longer have place. The cry of the exile from 'la belle

FRANCE' became the cry of a soul exiled from heaven.

If romanticism is this poetry which is inspired by nature, if it is this longing for something finer, if Catholic romanticism raises the minds of men above the earth earthly, then we must conclude that the veterans of French Canadian poetry, whether they be truly, wholly original or not, whether they be romantic according to the form of their verse or not, were certainly essentially romantic in their choice of subjects, in their outpouring, in a word, they were 'romantiques de fond'; leave the tools aside, the ideas, the conceptions, the soul of the poetry was romanticist.

Mgr. Emile Chartier divides the literary movements in Canada into two schools: 'l'école patriotique de Québec' and 'l'école lyrique de Montréal'. This division seeming the most plausible of those suggested in the histories of French Canadian literature, we have decided to use it in this study. In this Quebec school, Mgr. Chartier has placed: Octave Crémazie, Louis Fréchette, Pamphile Le May, William Chapman and Alfred Morisset. In studying the works of these poets, it ^{will} ~~shall~~ be our endeavour to show that they treated subjects peculiar to the school of romantic poetry, that their inspiration is Catholic and that for the greater

part their works show all or most of the romantic characteristics. We have omitted discussing the form to any great extent because in the majority of cases, the stereotyped and accepted forms have been used. A chapter which follows contains a comparative study of the versification of the poets herein discussed.

More specifically, we shall seek to bring out in the works of the above-named poets: -.

1. Love of nature, the inspiration of their works;
2. Nostalgia for France and for the heavenly fatherland;
3. Sentiments of human love, those of joy and sorrow, completely free from this tearful bleakness characteristic of Lamartine and Hugo;
4. Patriotism born out of a love of nature and of the country of adoption;
5. Love of God, kept vigorous by strong faith and confidence;
6. Family life with joys and sorrows;
7. Heroic acceptance of suffering and its teachings
8. Christian philosophy of life and morality.

In French Canada, there was no place for what is known as 'le Classicisme'. A literature written for the aristocracy, to flatter the court, a psychological literature which despises the humble peasant, the people

of the street, the earth, could not easily find sympathy in French Canada. It is impossible that a lover of his country could write after the manner of the classicists, disdaining beautiful nature.

Mgr. Camille Roy has written in his "Nouveaux Essais":

"Aucune poésie n'a été plus humaine que la poésie romantique parce qu'aucune n'a exprimé plus complètement toute la sensibilité de l'homme." 1

Our forefathers were obliged in their 'sensibilité de l'homme' to find in a romanticist literature the canal of their ideas. If the forests of America caused the lyre of Romanticism's grandfather, Chateaubriand, to vibrate, how much more so would Fréchette and Le May be inspired by that same commanding force? In Canada, there is every source of inspiration for romantic poetry: nature, solitude, love, faith, suffering, family joys, patriotism. Had Lamartine been born in such a country, would not his song have been more beautiful?

1. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Nouveaux Essais. P. 165

CHAPTER II

OCTAVE CREMAZIE

"Il nous faut quelque chose, en
cette triste vie. Qui nous parlant
de Dieu, d'art et de poésie,
Nous élève au dessus de la réalité."

Chapter II Octave Crémazie.

"Il nous faut quelque chose, en cette triste vie
Qui nous parlant de Dieu, d'art et de poésie,
Nous élève au dessus de la réalité."

"Le romantisme catholique est la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur." Such a definition so contrary to the current ones given to romanticism is the one which must be kept before us. The word 'nostalgia', one to be used so frequently in this study, merits a bit of consideration. Radically, it comes from two Greek words, 'nostos', which means a return and 'algos', which means suffering. Put into less compact form, nostalgia would then mean the suffering of an exile, a longing for a return, for a return to one's home, to the warm glow of friendship, to parents and friends who are dear to us, and for a Christian soul, it is the return to the divine Fatherland, our eternal, heavenly abode. Nostalgia is the torturing sentiment known to the human heart as it wanders through the ephemeral joys and more realistic sufferings of this life while awaiting the home-coming of its Pilgrim's Progress in God. The poet who sings these longings, these sighs, who seeks in nature the Hand of the Creator, who knows only too well the suffering of exile, this voice which

cries out in the desert among strangers, is the romanticist, truly Christian and truly Catholic; it is the voice of our first French Canadian poet--Octave Crémazie. Verily, in order to be a true Catholic romantic poet, one must love and suffer, know how to love suffering, know how to seek God in suffering and live a life of faith and resignation. Crémazie had a thorough understanding of his role.

Everything in him portrays the romanticist. His was that delicate sensitiveness of heart which causes one to suffer and in turn to understand the sufferings of others. He knew physical pain, exile, betrayal with its heart rent; he bore the millstone of discouragement about his bended neck. From the store-house of his own suffering he had ample material for 'le mal du siècle' in which the European romanticists so gloried. Crémazie, however, knew how to suffer in silence; his poems were not avenues of self-pity. With this native sensibility, there were other factors, strong in inclining him to romanticism: his literary education, his realism, the inspiration of religion and Catholic morality. In his lyrical verse, in which he strongly adheres to the poetic forms then in vogue, he treats all lyrical subjects: nature, the sorrows of war, French heroism in Canada, death, intimate

sentiments of love, gratitude and friendship.

As in the case of the great French romanticists, Crémazie's art was at its height when he wrote in sadness. In a manner very much different from that of Hugo and Lamartine, did Crémazie sing his griefs. He always endeavoured to be very impersonal, but here and there, sorrow's dart pierces through the would-be objectivity of his verse and lays bare the wounds of his sore heart. His miserable existence was filled with these sorrows which detach the heart of man from this earth, which increase the nostalgia for heaven, which give to sufferings an impetus which carries them well beyond this life.

"La vie de Crémazie, prise dans son ensemble, est à elle seule un grand et beau poème..... Crémazie offrit sa vie en holocauste sur l'autel du grand art." 1

Well has the author characterized Crémazie who so carefully steered his craft away from the stream into which many of the romanticists glibly floated... 'le mal du siècle.'

"Il peut sembler étrange," says Charles ab der Halden, "au premier abord, que Crémzaie ne nous ait pas laissé des chants d'exil, quelque chose comme les 'Tristes d'Ovide'. Plusieurs raisons expliquent ce silence. Musset a dit: 'Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux.' 'Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots.'

1. CHARBONNEAU, Jean, Des Influences Françaises au Canada
Tome II p. 228

Mais il est certaines âmes délicates qui ne font pas litière de leurs sentiments. Se souvenant peut-être du beau sonnet de Lecomte de Lisle, Les Montreurs, mais avec une incontestable maîtrise d'exécution, Crémazie écrivit à son correspondant fidèle: 'La poésie coule par toutes vos blessures, dites-vous encore. De tout ce que j'avais, il ne me reste que la douleur: je la garde pour moi. Je ne veux pas me servir de mes souffrances comme d'un moyen d'attirer sur moi l'attention et la pitié, car j'ai toujours pensé que c'était chose honteuse que de se tailler dans ses malheurs un manteau d'histrion. Dans mes oeuvres, je n'ai jamais parlé de moi, de mes tristesses ou de mes joies et c'est peut-être à cette impersonnalité que je dois les quelques succès que j'ai obtenus.' " 1

Even though he does describe in mournful note the nature and depths of his suffering, even though he prides himself on his astute concealment of his misery, suffering has made the soul of Crémazie so sensitive and so sympathetic that when he writes his characters portray what he himself endeavours to hide. Into the mouth of the valiant old Canadian soldier, he puts his psychology:

"De sa propre douleur, il voulut souffrir seul."

However, Crémazie considers his miseries in the light of eternity; his very existence kept him close to eternity and hence his vision was beyond earth's horizon. He had made his own the truth about which Lacordaire so beautifully wrote: "Presque tous les saints ont senti cette mélancolie dont les anciens disaient qu'il n'y a pas de génie sans elle. En effet,

1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la Littérature Canadienne-française, p. 76

la mélancolie est inséparable de tout esprit qui va loin, de tout coeur qui est profond." In the light of another world, the pardon of wrongs even that of betrayal of friends which made the poet's exile necessary, becomes easier, though the poor human heart aches.

"Priez pour l'exilé, qui loin de sa patrie
Expira sans entendre une parole amie,
Isolé dans sa vie, isolé dans sa mort,
Personne ne viendra donner une prière." 1

Here is the core of Crémazie's great suffering--the knowledge that far from his native-land, he lived in physical and moral misery, knowing that neither he nor his poetry was wanted in his own country, that country for which he had cherished so many literary endeavours and whence he knew he would not have the consolation of seeing even one of his countrymen with him at his death-bed.

Because of his acute suffering and extreme sensitiveness, who better than Crémazie was able to write the verse that poured from the disappointed heart of the poor Canadian he described in 'Le Drapeau de Carillon':

"Trompé dans son espoir, brisé par le malheur
Qui dira les tourments de son âme navrée?" 2

While referring to this sympathetic sensibility of soul, Mgr. Chartier writes:

1. CRÉMAZIE, Octave, Les Morts P. 117
2. Ibid Le Drapeau de Carillon P. 128

"Crémazie sut toucher comme personne chez-nous la corde de la tristesse et de la mélancolie. Cette corde-là, elle est toujours prête à vibrer dans l'âme canadienne française si attachée au culte des défunts, si pitoyable aux malheurs d'autrui. " 1

In his letters to Abbé Casgrain, letters which are themselves compositions of beautiful romanticist prose, can be read the story of his sufferings, moral and physical. They call to mind the ascetic Léon Blois. y

"Priez encore pour ceux dont les âmes blessées,
Ici-bas n'ont connu que les sombres pensées,
Qui font les jours sans joie et les nuits sans
sommeil,
Pour ceux qui, chaque jour, bénissant l'existence
N'ont trouvé le matin, au lieu d'espérance
A leurs rêves dorés qu'un horrible réveil." 2

In Crémazie's poetry, that note of despair so characteristic of de Vigny, for example, does not make itself heard, even though his soul may have known the experience to which he refers in his letter to his friend:

"Bien des fois, si je n'avais eu une foi canadienne, je serais allé me pendre comme Gérard de Nerval au reverbère du coin, ou je me serais abandonné comme Henri Muger; mais quand le noir m'enveloppait de trop près, quand je sentais le désespoir me saisir à la gorge et que le drap mortuaire me semblait tomber sur la tête, je courais à Notre Dame-des-Victoires, j'y disais une bonne prière et je me relevais, plus moi-même. Je ne suis pas un dévot, mais je suis un croyant." 3

A strong Canadian faith, a firm hope and an ardent

1. CHARTIER, Mgr. Emile, La Vie de l'esprit, p. 299
2. CRÉMAZIE, Octave, Les Morts, p. 117
3. CASGRAIN, L'Abbe H. R., Oeuvres Complètes, tome 11, p. 416

longing for eternity and its promises made of Crémazie a truly Catholic romanticist, one who, in rising above his personal griefs, distinguishes himself from the followers of Hugo or of Lamartine, and kept him from being a close imitator of them. In considering to what extent Crémazie was influenced by Hugo, Lamartine, de Musset and de Vigny, Professor Marion makes the following apt statement:

"A l'encontre de ces grands ancêtres, Crémazie n'a pas évolué de la croyance à l'indifférence ou à l'hostilité contre la religion de ses pères; il ne s'est pas enfermé dans un pessimisme hautain et farouche; il n'a pas demandé aux plaisirs faciles de pimenter une existence passée dans la solitude." 1

Laurence Bisson, in his study of the similarities between French and French Canadian romanticism, pays unwittingly perhaps, a sincere compliment to the Catholic faith of this 'Hugo-canadien manqué' when he writes:

"Son attitude devant la mort ressemble beaucoup à celle de Hugo, et cette impression sera confirmée plus loin par les paroles du poète lui-même à propos de la 'Promenade'. Crémazie n'a pas encore la vision apocalyptique de Hugo; il n'a pas tout à fait adopté la métaphysique hugolienne; il ne ressent pas encore l'horreur physique de la mort; comme Hugo; il n'a pas les procédés de Hugo pour donner l'impression de l'infini, de l'impondérable. Ses idées sont plus simples et plus catholiques." 2

Coupled with his faith and hope, Crémazie possessed strong moral principles, so frequently

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1. MARION, S., Les Lettres Canadiennes d'Autrefois, T. 5
p. 79
 2. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme au Canada Français,
p. 1, p. 128

absent in European romanticist poets. His indignation at Voltarian influence and immorality in the French court found echo in lines like the following:

"De tout ce que le coeur regarde comme cher,
Des vertus dont le ciel fit le parfum de l'âme,
Voltaire alors riait de son rire d'enfer;
Et d'un feu destructeur semant partout la
flamme,
Menaçant à la fois et le trône et l'autel,
Il ébranlait le monde en son délire impie;
Et la cour avec lui riant de l'Eternel,
N'avait plus d'autre Dieu que le Dieu de
l'orgie." 1

When M. Thibault, a Normal School professor reproached Crémazie with a lack of morality in his poem, 'La Fiancée du Marin', he wrote the following justification for his conception of morality:

"Si la mère et la jeune fille trouvaient dans la religion une consolation à leur désespoir, ce serait plus moral, sans doute, mais où serait le drame? Cette légende n'en serait plus une, ce ne serait plus que le récit d'un accident comme il en arrive dans toutes les familles. On ne fait pas de poèmes, encore bien moins des légendes avec les faits journaliers de la vie. D'ailleurs, la mère tombe à l'eau par accident et la fiancée ne se précipite dans les flots que lorsque son âme a déjà sombrée dans la folie. Où donc la morale est-elle méconnue dans tout ce poème? La morale est une grande chose, mais il ne faut pas essayer de la mettre là où elle n'a que faire. M. Thibault doit bien savoir que lorsque la folie s'empare d'un cerveau malade, cette pauvre morale n'a plus qu'à faire son paquet!" 2

As a student, Crémazie had studied the classicists more than the romanticists, until he met the brilliant Abbé Holmes, who having fired his stu-

1. CREMAZIE, Octave, 'Le Drapeau de Carillon' P.128
2. CASGRAIN, L'Abbé H.R., Oeuvres Complètes, P. 44

dent with a great love for study and his own 'passion de vivre que pour la pensée', gave his student an interest in the works of the romanticists. Here Crémazie met the authors who were to influence his works and the kind of poetry he was to adopt as his own; the strength of this influence he admits in a letter to Abbé Casgrain, written from Paris, January 29, 1867:

"Pour moi, tout en admirant les immortels chefs - d'oeuvres du XVIIe siècle, j'aime de toutes mes forces cette école romantique qui a fait éprouver à mon âme les jouissances les plus douces et les plus pures qu'elle ait jamais senties. Et encore aujourd'hui, lorsque la mélancolie enveloppe mon âme comme un manteau de plomb, la lecture d'une méditation de Lamartine ou d'une Nuit d'Alfred de Musset me donne plus de calme et de sérénité que je ne saurais en trouver dans toutes les tragédies de Corneille et de Racine. Lamartine et Musset sont des hommes de mon temps. Leurs illusions, leurs rêves, leurs aspirations, leurs regrets trouvent un écho sonore dans mon âme, parce que moi, chétif, à une distance énorme de ces grands génies, j'ai caressé les mêmes rêves et j'ai ouvert mon coeur aux mêmes aspirations pour adoucir l'amertume des mêmes regrets." 1

Crémazie left the seminary to take his abode in an environment all set to foster the romanticist spirit already awakened in him by his professor. Surrounded by the French authors he had learned to love, in silence and meditation, in a lonely library, the young lover of romanticist poets found fuel for his lyrical fires.

1. CASGRAIN, L'Abbé H. R. Oeuvres Complètes- Tome II, P. 341

Even though the poetry of the classicists was taught in the schools and colleges of Quebec, there was little sympathy on the part of the early French Canadian for this type of poetry. The early colonists lived a life too practical, too real, too close to nature, to appreciate the illusion of the theatre, the pedantry of 'la préciosité' the psychological discussions and problame, the flattery and exalted language of the court, all of which formed the basis of classicist literature. The French Canadian was naturally romanticist. Crémazie becomes the living mouth-piece of the majority of our early French Canadian poets when he writes:

"Quel lien peut-il y avoir entre moi et les héros des tragédies? En quoi la destinée de ces rois, de ces reines peut-elle m'intéresser? Le style du poète est splendide, il flatte mon oreille et enchante mon esprit; mais les idées de ces hommes d'un autre temps ne disent rien ni à mon âme, ni à mon coeur." 1

Classicist mythology, with its pagan background was distasteful to the strong Catholic morality which was that of Crémazie:

"Le romantisme n'aurait-il d'autre mérite que de nous avoir délivrés de la mythologie et de la tragédie que nous devrions lui élever des autels.... Cette mythologie grêcque, ces auteurs païens qui déifient souvent des hommes qui méritent tout bonnement la corde, ne peuvent à mon sens inspirer aux élèves que des idées fausses et des curiosités malsaines." 2

In this regard, Charles ab der Halden, has paid Crémazie the following tribute:

"Il a rendu aux Canadiens le service énorme de les délivrer de tout servitude mythologique." 3

1. GASGRAIN, l'Abbé H.R. Oeuvres complètes, p. 45
2. Id Ibid p. 46
3. ab der HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la littérature Canadienne Française, p.113

To this praise, a more modern critic adds:

"Félicitons-le tout d'abord d'être resté dans l'une des meilleures traditions du Romantisme français et d'avoir éconduit de ses poèmes les sacripants et la valetaille de la mythologie païenne." 1

The Canadian colonist, who knew vigorous, hard work, who lived so close to nature as to struggle and rejoice with her changing moods and caprices, who experienced too well and often the burden of the cross, who realized so fully that life and death, beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice travel life's pathway together who lived an energetic life in this truth and reality, was, in every sense of the word, a realist. Crémazie, proud descendant of these early colonists, was bound to be sympathetic towards the realism found in romanticism. In his defense of his poem 'Les Trois Morts', he writes as a true romanticist:

"L'école romantique ne préfère pas le laid au beau, mais elle accepte la nature telle qu'elle est: elle croit qu'elle peut bien contempler, quelquefois même chanter ce que Dieu a bien pris la peine de créer. Si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, elle a démocratisé la poésie et lui a permis de ne plus célébrer seulement l'amour, les jeux, les rires, le ruisseau murmurant, mais encore d'accorder sa lyre pour chanter ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler le laid, qui n'est souvent qu'une autre forme du beau dans l'harmonie universelle de la création. Je ne dis pas, comme Victor Hugo, que le beau c'est le laid, mais je crois qu'il n'y a que le mal qui soit laid d'une manière absolue. La prairie émaillée de fleur est belle; mais le roche frappé par la foudre pour être beau d'une autre manière, l'est-il moins?" 2

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1. MARION, S. Les Lettres Canadiennes d'Autrefois, Tome 5, p. 176
 2. CASGRAIN, l'Abbé H. R. Oeuvres complètes. p, 50

This realism for which Crémazie is criticized is perhaps most evident in those poems which treat of death; for example, we find in them lines like the following taken from 'Les Morts':

"Et leur oeil fixé et creux n'a pas de trahisons." 1

"Pour les parts de vos coeurs dormant dans leurs
tombeaux." 1

"Dans leur étroit cerceuil n'ont plus d'autres car-
esses
Que les baisers du ver qui dévore leurs os." 1

Crémazie feels justified in his use of fantasy, or better what he calls hypothesis. The following quotation is his justification for using it:

"Le réalism, la fantaisie, est-ce qu'ils n'ont pas pour chefs Shakespeare, Dante, Bryon, Goethe?

Ezechiel, le plus poétique, à mon avis de tous les prophètes, n'est-il pas tantôt un magnifique, un divin fantaisiste, et tantôt un sombre et farouche réaliste?

La fantaisie, elle est partout. Le monde intellectuel et moral nous fournit à chaque instant matière à fantaisie, ou si vous, l'aimez mieux, a hypothèse, car tout ce tapage n'est qu'une querelle de mots. La foi et la raison nous apprennent l'existence d'un lieu de punition éternelle pour les méchants et d'un séjour de délices sans fin pour les élus. Mais sous quelle forme de souffrance le damné doit-il expier ses crimes? Comment se manifestent la bonté et la grandeur de Dieu dans la récompense de ses serviteurs? Nous en savons bien peu de choses, et la description qu'on nous en fait qu'est-elle, sinon une sainte, une austère fantaisie?" 2

Crémazie breaks with the traditional romanticists in introducing a new note; in opposition to their pessimism,

1. CREMAZIE, Octave, Les Morts p. 117

2. CASGRAIN, l'Abbé H. R., Oeuvres complètes, p.51

he offered the optimism born of the theological virtue of hope. He is 'l'Allegro' singing a brighter chant in the 'Il Penseroso' chorus of older romanticists. To their depressing wail of selfish self-pity, Crémazie intones the glorious uplifting note of unselfish suffering and silent endurance, of charity great enough to hide one's hurts in order to compassionate with others; in contrast to their morose analysis of deceptions, heart-ache, and disillusion, he offers resignation to the divine Will, the pardon of injuries, of treason, of injustice. It is in this manner that Crémazie, while using the themes and conventional forms traditional among the romanticists, which bind him and take away his freedom to be original, is nevertheless original. His Catholic inspiration gives him a lofty conception of idea which soars above the disheartening, deadening, heavy French and German romanticism and frees Crémazie from its thralldom, making him for this reason more original a romanticist than he might otherwise have been.

Crémazie has been criticized for his lack of inventive ability. L'Abbé Casgrain holds that:

"Crémazie n'a été vraiment original que dans ses poésies patriotiques, c'est le secret de sa popularité et de son meilleur titre devant l'avenir" 1

1. CASGRAIN, l'Abbé H. R. Oeuvres Complètes, p.55

Many critics have made accurate, exact studies to show just how closely Crémazie imitated Hugo, Lamartine and de Musset. It is true that Crémazie neither in his choice of lyrical subjects nor in the forms he used for them, makes any pretense at originality. However, as we have shown above, he does distinguish himself from the French school by the sublime Catholic inspiration which is his and which is so evidently lacking in his would-be masters. It is this very inspiration which characterizes his romanticism as Catholic, 'la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur'.

If the criticism which follows is true, if Crémazie's two best poems are those which treat of death, if these poems give him immortality, once more have we proof that it is his Catholic inspiration which makes him great as a poet, both romantic and original:

"Ses deux meilleurs morceaux de poésie sont 'Les Morts et La Promenade des trois morts! Cette dernière production peut à elle seule assurer l'immortalité à son auteur. On ne sait ce qu'il faut admirer davantage ou la richesse de la rime ou le luxe des images, ou l'élévation des pensées, ou l'originalité de plan.

On voit la grandeur de ce sujet et l'originalité de cette conception. Il y a des flots de poésie dans cette première partie. L'imagination de l'auteur déploie une force incroyable. Elle s'élève jusqu'aux hautes régions de l'infini et de l'incommensurable.

.....
Les Morts offre plus de perfection que La Promenade de Trois Morts. " 1

1. LAREAU, Emond, Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne P 89

In his comparison, between Crémazie and Lamartine, Lareau, we have seen, places the former in a very favourable light. Charles ab der Halden places him on a par with de Vigny. Both comparisons show us that Crémazie becomes superior to the great French romanticists because of the lofty conception of his ideas, all inspired by his deep Catholic faith.

"Une seule fois dans la pièce intitulée 'Les Morts' qui n'a rien de commun avec la malencontreuse 'Promenade de Trois Morts', Crémazie, comme c'était son droit de poète, aborde un genre qui se rapproche de la belle méditation à la Vigny, la forme d'art la plus noble qui soit. Sans doute ce croyant ne voit pas

'Les pieds lourds et puissants de chaque Destinée
Peser sur chaque tête et sur toute action!'

Il n'arrive pas à la résignation stoïcienne du loup, et n'a pas une allégorie comparable à cette merveilleuse Maison du Berger. Mais il trouve de beaux accents pour plaindre les oubliées:

'L'oubli des vivants pesant sur votre tombe
Sur vos os décharnés plus lourdement retombe
Que le plomb du cercueil!'

Il envie les justes qui

'Déroulent leur vertu comme un tapis splendide
Et marchent sur le mal sans jamais le toucher.'

1

If he has any merit as a romantic poet, it is thanks to his faith from which he drew such wealth of inspiration and to which he was always so attached and so faithful.

Crémazie, as well as most of our early poets, has been criticized, and not without reason, as we have seen, for his lack of originality. As a founder of a

new literature, he was bound by the rules already set up in France by Victor Hugo. Crémazie's inspiration and subjects were of the romanticist school; the form he would use then must be conventional. In conforming with this very imposition, he showed himself the romanticist which we claim him to be. Mgr. Chartier had written the following words concerning this question:

"En ce qui concerne la versification, on aura constaté sans doute comment, à l'époque du romantisme canadien, l'on a évolué du solennel alexandrin au léger dissyllabe. Mais ce qui frappe plus encore, c'est l'unité d'inspiration chez tous ces poètes. Ils ne sont ni des psychologues habitués à se replier sur eux-mêmes, ni les premiers du moins, des descriptifs habiles à moduler leurs observations. Tous sont fascinés par les prouesses de leurs aïeux français." 1

Charles ab der Halden does not condemn in Crémazie this imitation of form, even in the detailed study he has made of French, and more especially Hugolian, influences to which the poet has succumbed:

"Crémazie a quelque peu modifié le rythme. Le double quatrain de Hugo s'est allongé en une strophe de dix vers, dont les six derniers riment en 'âge' et en 'eurs'. Cependant malgré l'incontestable supériorité de Hugo, dont les rimes en tans, bine, appuyées par la concome, sont pleines d'imprévu, nous préférons ici le poète canadien, moins artificiel. Avec un refrain emprunté à une fantaisie de jongleur qui amuse, il a fait quelque chose de naturel et de charmant." 2

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1. CHARTIER, Mgr. Emile, La Vie de l'esprit., p. 133
 2. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, La Littérature canadienne française. P. 70

"Lamartine, et Musset sont des hommes de mon temps. Leurs illusions, leurs rêves, leurs aspirations, leurs regrets trouvent un écho sonore dans mon âme parce que moi, chétif, à une distance énorme de ces grands génies, j'ai caressé les mêmes illusions, je me suis bercé dans les mêmes rêves, j'ai ouvert mon coeur aux mêmes aspirations pour adoucir l'amertume des mêmes regrets." 1

If he found such sympathy in the poems of the romanticists, one would naturally expect to find in Crémazie's works the lyrical note he admired in others.

"La première voix véritablement inspirée qui fit vibrer aux accords d'une lyre émine~~m~~ment archaïque des sons harmonieux et poétiques est celle d'Octave Crémazie." 2

And certainly on the lyre of Crémazie, there vibrated the sensitive strings of love, patriotism, gratitude, faith, hope. Every lyrical sentiment found echo in the noble, generous heart of Crémazie and an outlet in his poetry. In his love, the great heart of Crémazie held his country, nature, his friends, his gratitude and out of the fullness of his heart his poetry flows. Each line of 'Drapeau de Carillon' beats with his love for Canada. He sang the beauty of his country's nature, wild, savage, grand. The rivers, the mountains, the fields, the forests, everything which makes this great nature which is Canada's strongly inspired the works of Crémazie. His lyrical heart could not

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1. CASGRAIN, l'Abbé, H.R., Oeuvres complètes, P.45
 2. LAREAU, Edmond, Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne P.87

but love and sing these natural beauties which surrounded his youth and maturer years until the time of his exile. To give but a few examples:

"Quand le doux rossignol quitte les bocages,
Quand le ciel gris d'automne, ammassant
ses nuages,
Prépare le linceul que l'hiver doit jeter
Sur le champs refroidis.....

Ce ciel pur et serein, ces splendides mont-
agnes,
Ce fleuve grandiose et ces vertes campagnes,
Fières de leur fécondité.....

Montmorency roulant sa vague mugissante,
Le clocher dans le ciel jetant sa voix
vibrante
(De Français, du Chrétien, ô souvenirs pieux!)
Etaient là comme au jour où, saluant des
frères,
Il trouvait sur nos bords et la foi de ses
pères
Et la langue de ses aïeux."

However, Professor Marion credits Crémazie with little poetical ability when he describes Canadian nature scenes; his poems are not of a grandeur equal to that of Canadian scenery and it would seem to the critic that he saw little of Canada blinded as he was by his great amount of reading of foreign authors. Whatever their weaknesses, his lines about his native country are openly admiring and full of patriotic love.

Admiration for France is a passion with Crémazie. Louis Fréchette in writing of it says:

"Crémazie aimait la France avec idolatrie et ce fut le patriotisme qui le sacra poète. " 1

1. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada français, P. 130

The greater part of his work is consecrated to this patriotism and this obsession comes even into those poems which are not directly connected with it.

"Sans craindre des tyrans les menaces terribles,
Les peuples béniront les deux noms invincibles,
De France et d'Albion! "

"Ah! nous pouvons de moins dans des combats
paisibles
A leur exemple unis et comme eux invincibles,
Continuer toujours au bord du Saint-Laurent
Ces sublimes vertus, ce bienfaisant génie
Qui vont sauver encore au jour de l'agonie
Le vieux monde expirant."

"Terre de nos aïeux, ô sublime contrée!
Toi dont nous conservons la mémoire sacrée."

When Crémazie strikes the funeral chord of his lyre, it is to sing what is most personal with him. Through the mouths of the dead, his intimate sufferings, his illusions, his exile, his betrayal, his great faith, his resignation, his forgiveness, his hope, his love for his family, his gratitude, his compassion for the sufferings of others find echo.

Our first French Canadian poet is romantic by his sensibility of heart, his education, the inspiration of religion and Catholic morality, the form of his verses, the lyrical themes which he treated in his writings.

"On pourrait citer ici nombre de vers romantiques écrits dans la manière de notre poète qui le peindraient admirablement et que se plaisaient à formuler les adeptes du romantisme de la première heure, e.g. Théophile Gautier....'La poésie n'est pas un état permanent de l'âme....."

personne n'a strictment vécu de sa poésie, excepté ceux qui en sont morts.'

Et ce fut une longue série de souffrances et d'inquiétudes morales. Voilà pour moi la plus belle partie de l'oeuvre de Crémazie. Malheureusement, cette oeuvre ne fut pas écrite et c'est une perte pour la littérature canadienne.

Ce grand exilé eut pu se révéler à nous sous un jour particulier, et comme les grands poètes de la douleur, nous associer aux méditations de son exil. Cela eut été nouveau chez nous, surtout à l'époque où vécut Crémazie.....Je me demande si le chantre de l'exil n'eut pas surpassé le barde du 'Drapeau de Carillon' et de 'Vieux Soldat Canadien'." 1

With Jean Charbonneau, we agree that the work of Crémazie is very incomplete, but romantic, of that Catholic romanticism which was defined at the outset of this study, 'la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur', and which the poet himself so well described in these lines:

"Il nous faut quelque chose, en cette triste
vie
Qui nous parlant de Dieu, d'art et de poésie,
Nous élève au-dessus de la réalité."

or again

"Avez-vous éprouvé la malice des hommes?
Ou plutôt trouviez-vous qu'ici-bas nous ne
sommes
Qu'un jouet d'un instant dans les mains du
malheur?
Avez-vous donc appris que l'existence avide,
Hélas! ne pouvait pas combler l'immense vide
De ce gouffre sans fond que l'on nomme le
coeur?"

CHAPTER III

LOUIS FRECHETTE

"Mais il est un baume odorant
Donné parfois au coeur souffrant
Par Dieu lui-même:
Ce doux baume, trop rare, hélas!
C'est l'assurance que là-bas,
Quelqu'un nous aime!"

Chapter III Louis Fréchet.

"Mais il est un baume odorant
Donné parfois au coeur souffrant
Par Dieu lui-même:
Ce doux baume, trop rare, hélas!
C'est l'assurance que là-bas,
Quelqu'un nous aime!"

The lifeless flowers which had given up their breathing when Death made cold and rigid the hand bearing them home to a loved one are realistic as an image of the departure of the great poet-spirit from the mould of clay which had held captive the soul of Louis Fréchet. His poetic spirit was snuffed out in its full beauty just as his own death-gripped hand took life from the flowers which were to give pleasure to her whom he loved and revered whose virtues and beauty he sang in his poem. The poetic flame which had flickered wild and furiously in its youth had in maturer years reached the calm serenity of assurance. It took Louis Fréchet more than half a life-time to find himself. When he did, his poetry was full of the riches which was his soul's. In the autumn of life, his spirit, weaned of all the bitterness and disillusionments of youth, spent itself in extolling the country, the people, the places he loved. And like the drooping flowers which died with

him, the poetic spirit of this great man calmly, quietly spent itself out of existence. As one writer has expressed it,

"Louis Fréchette est mort en beauté."

Without a doubt, Louis Fréchette leads the list of our Canadian poets and is the first to reach a more individual romanticist poetry. Critics, both French and French Canadian, are unanimous in placing Fréchette in the school of romanticism.

"M. Fréchette, lui est un pur romantique. Il a lu V. Hugo avec passion et se l'est assimilé. Hugo est le père de tous ceux qui écrivent en vers français." 1

"La caractéristique principale du talent de Louis Fréchette n'est pas malaisée à définir: il fut surtout lyrique, un beau jouer de flûte." 2

"Louis Fréchette reste, tout le long de son oeuvre un fervent romantique." 3

"Au fond, notre lauréat (Fréchette) reste romantique. Toutes ses traditions, toute son instruction, ses fréquentations de jeunesse faisait pencher la balance de ce côté-là." 4

Fréchette's romanticism was the natural result of his literary studies, of the influence of Crémazie and of his innate love for all that makes romantic poetry. He convinces his reader of this in his choice of subjects and in the way in which he

1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, La Littérature Can. Française P. 241
2. D'ARLES, Henri, Makers of Canadian Literature - Louis Fréchette P. 66
3. ROY, Camille, Nouveaux Essais P.165
4. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada Français P.214

treats these subjects.

Probably, the poets whose works found their way into the hands of Fréchette were Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Mgr. Camille Roy states the extent of this influence in the following words:

"Confidentiel au rêveur, comme Lamartine; emphatique, éloquent à la façon de Hugo; comme tous deux, curieux de prendre aux regards du lecteur une pose avantageuse, Louis Fréchette reste, tout le long de son oeuvre, un fervent romantique. " 1

These two French romanticists, so convinced and so convincing, easily made a lasting impression on the already sensitive, lyrical soul of the promising young Canadian poet. He had but to close his eyes on the rich scenes of nature which are those of Canada to live in his imagination the word picture drawn in 'Les Nuits', 'Le Lac' and others. In a literary epoch which had not as yet any history of its own, Fréchette could not help but read and be influenced by the literature coming from the mother-country. It was that of the romanticists; his own lyre vibrated in unison with it, not because of the influence so much, but because it found there sympathetic vibrations, the channel his own poetic inspiration sought.

Ardent, fiery, impassioned with poetry as he was, the young Fréchette in his pursuits of outlets

1. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Poètes de Chez Nous P. 35

to his lyrical outbursts, was naturally an admirer of Canada's first bard. Arnould writes of him:

"L. Fréchette succéda à Octave Crémazie, comme, dans les dynasties, le fils succède au père." 1

and his friend of college days describes him as

"un jeune homme plein de talent et d'avenir qui, lui aussi, n'avait qu'un défaut, celui de préférer Lamartine à Pothier et Octave Crémazie à son frère Jacques." 2

As we study later the works of Fréchette, we will see how in his love of Canada and of France, in his way of writing, in his choice of subjects, the younger man modelled himself on the older, whom he was destined to surpass.

In comparison with that of Hugo and Crémazie, and because it was evidently modelled on theirs, Fréchette's voluntary exile seems somewhat childish. It is the action of a young hot-headed politician, disgusted with the realities of life and escaping from them under the disguise of a would-be magnanimous hero. In the miserable, dishonourable and suffering-inflicting exile of Crémazie, we have a picture of real sorrow and the writing that comes of it is beautiful in its charity, resignation and forgiveness; there is not enough of it. One resents, at first, the vitriolic

1. ARNOULD, Louis, Nos Amis les Canadiens P.157
2. ROUTHIER, A.B., Causeries du Dimanche P.215

invectives that sound through 'La Voix d'un Exilé'; it does not evoke sympathy; it does not inspire; it does not contain that loftiness of sentiment which makes for Christian romanticism. However, although his cowardly exile did not bring out the best in Louis Fréchette because it was one of hatred, revenge, strife and misunderstanding, still, in the light of his more mature writing, one realizes that this period of his life was necessary as a means of disillusioning the young idealist, of making him realize the native worth and misery of human beings, and it shows that it was the natural reaction of one whose high ideals were shattered and whose noble aspirations to do good for his country were thwarted when his would-be work for Canada was frustrated. Routhier condemns Fréchette strongly for this exile of his; he claims he might as well have gone to fight for the Pope as to impose on himself a useless exile. The young poet needed this outlet; when he had delivered to the world his grievances, and had tried his chance once more at the game of politics, with its long trail of ingratitude, he was satisfied to retire to a more quiet life and indulge the passion which was his. At this stage, he begins to produce the more beautiful of his poems, the mature, soft music of his lyrical talent, his Catholic

romanticism.

One could not live in the beautiful surroundings which were those of Fréchette and not write lyrical poetry, if he were going to write anything. Our early French Canadian writers, less influenced by the different French schools than are our modern writers, naturally wrote lyrical poetry. The rhythmic murmur of poplars, the low muffled beats of water on the banks of rivers, the chirping of birds, the mystic quiet of mellow moonlight naturally wove themselves into the strings of the romanticist's lyre. Fréchette, whose sensitivity to his surroundings was always great, easily fell a prey to the romantic nature that surrounded him. He took it to his poetic soul and wrote it in words full of music, if not too full of philosophy. Henri D'Arles reproaches him this lack:

"L'on ne sort pas de la lecture de son oeuvre beaucoup plus riche de pensées. Il n'a rien eu du poète philosophique." 1

But who wants philosophy in poetry? If the poet can charm the senses with colour, harmony and imagery, if he can awaken beautiful emotions and sentiment, if he has fired the imagination with the beautiful, if we caress his works in loving appreciation of their own beauty, has he not achieved a marvellous purpose?

I. D'ARLES, Henri, Louis Fréchette, Makers of Canada Series P. 66

The same author admits this power in Fréchet^éte:

"Si l'oeuvre de Louis Fréchet^éte ne se caractérise ni par un apport réel au domaine de la pensée pure, ni par des aperçus nouveaux sur les grands problèmes où l'intelligence humaine aime à se jouer, elle a, en revanche, une haute valeur de sentiment, d'image, de peinture et de musique. Notre poète fut surtout un sentimental, un descriptif, un beau joueur de flûte. Il avait beaucoup de coeur; c'est un émotif. " 1

Charles ab der Halden is of the same opinion when he writes of Fréchet^éte:

"Lisez du Fréchet^éte; nous pourrez discuter, critiquer, peser la valeur des termes; écoutez-en lire, surtout par le poète lui-même, et vous oublierez tout, parce que sur son berceau, une fée a passé ces dons précieux, la chaleur et la vie." 2

In order to appreciate better the works of his finely sensitized poetic nature, let us try to build his character from what friends and critics have said of him, and from what he has said of himself. Mgr. C. Roy writes of him:

"Impressionable, facile à attendrir, doué d'une âme toute gonflée de passions tumultueuses et fugitives, il a éprouvé, à un degré plus ou moins profond de sa sensibilité, des émotions. " 3

Of himself, the poet wrote the following, when he composed an ode to Pamphile Lemay on the occasion of his 'couronnement' by Laval University:

"Et nous voguions tous deux, toi songeur, moi fantasque
L'âme ivre de printemps, de soleil et d'amour." 4

1. D'ARLES, Henri, Louis Fréchet^éte, Makers of Canada Series P. 73
2. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, La Littérature Canadienne française P. 245
3. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Nouveaux Essais
4. FRÉCHETTE, Louis, Feuilles Volantes, P. 97

It was this young soul, filled with the joy of living which was later destined to see its fire flicker and burn low in the disillusionment that followed his political career. Because he was able to overcome his disappointment and still taste in later life the joys that were the desires of his youth, he was able to write with understanding:

"Voyageurs égarés au désert de la vie
Combien de malheureux, vaincus par la douleur
Dans leur illusion sans cesse poursuivis
Meurent sans avoir vu l'oasis du bonheur!" 1

Fréchette's full nature knew the rebound which brought him to ripe old age and death surrounded by the oasis of love, happiness and peace.

Critics, as we have seen, with one accord, place Fréchette among the romantic poets; his early reading, his native sensitiveness, his environment naturally made him such. We find that he treats all those subjects which are dear to the lyricist soul: love of Canada and of France, Christian sentiments of resignation in suffering, love, friendship and memories of the past. The wholesome French-Canadian poet, regardless of his admiration for the French romanticists, does not entertain us with the recital of his interior suffering nor does he treat the subject of love with anything but lofty sentiments and chaste handling. As Mgr. Roy expresses it:

"Ni Lamartine, ni surtout Musset ne paraissent, à ce point de vue, avoir exercé une grande influence sur la sensibilité ou l'imagination du poète." 2

1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Feuilles Volantes, Seul P. 187
2. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Poètes de chez-nous P. 36

Henri D'Arles has vividly written about Fréchettes's love of Canada and of France.

"Pour Fréchette, le Canada était une personne, et il était épris de sa conformation extérieure; les accidents de son sol, son grand fleuve, ses rivières, ses forêts, ses vallées, et le caractère si accusé de ses saisons, ses étés courts et brûlants, ses automnes âprement mélancoliques, les splendeurs vierges de ses hivers, lui ont fourni des notations où le réalisme du trait est précieux, où l'observation est directe..... Nul n'aura autant fait pour dessiner exactement la physionomie de notre nature." 1

"Ah! la France, Fréchette en a le culte. Il exalte la noblesse de sa pensée, les vertues de son sang. Elle demeure pour lui la mère-patrie. Crémazie déjà avait donné corps à nos sentiments restés si français, de génération en génération, malgré la conquête; Fréchette reprend ce thème, mais sur un mode nouveau, et il ajoute beaucoup aux quelques notes un peu larmoyantes aux quelles le vieux barde s'en était tenu, il exécute des variations inattendues, superbes et définitives sur cet air touchant." 2

The love of the exotique which claimed Chateaubriand and had him write of our America, was part of the nature of Fréchette. Like the 'barde québecquois', he knew and loved the scenic beauty of his native land. 'Sur le Mississippi', he relives the romanticism of the former:

"Nouveau René, vers toi je viens chercher l'oubli: Donne-moi son amer dictame!" 3

As the poet himself admits, his was 'l'âme ivre de printemps!' Because of that very inebriety and because his sensitiveness responded to nature, he could

1. 2. D'ARLES, Henri, Louis Fréchette, Makers of Canada P. 77, 79
3. FRÉCHETTE, Louis, Fleurs Boréales P. 77

pen lines like the following:

"Et, sous l'empire d'Ariel,
La terre semblera du ciel,
La fiancée." 1

Only a lover of nature, an earnest sympathetic observer could write:

"S'enfuyaient en avant, trainant leur ombre grèle
Dans le plus lumineux des eaux." 2

Influenced, as he was, by the quiet, the rugged, the awe-inspiring, the varied in Canada's pictorial beauty, Fréchet, leaving aside the Lamartinian meglomania, understood all the charms and hidden fancies of nature, her humour and her secrets. Like Francis Thompson, he 'drew the bolt of nature's secrecies' and reveals in cascading music or quiet note, his findings:

"Mystérieux et frais labyrinthe, secrets
Mille Iles!
Chapelet d'émeraude égrené sur les eaux." 3

"Le Saguenay profond roule ses ondes noires;
Parages désolés pleins de mornes histoires!" 4

The Poet's knowledge of nature is akin to that of the Indian when he writes such poems as 'La Dernière Iroquoise', 'La Forêt Canadienne' and 'L'Année Canadienne'. A thesis might well be written on this poetic understanding and transcription of nature-sentiment which characterized Fréchet. The above examples are but a drop in the bucket of his effusions.

1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Fleurs Boréales, Le Printemps P.91
2. Ibid Id La Découverte du
Mississippi P. 5
3. Ibid Id Les Oiseaux de Neige,
Les Mille Iles P.207
4. Ibid Id P.209

Fréchette's youth, spent as it was in 'trying
'out life' left him with a host of memories from which
he was frequently to draw. He himself expresses this
experience thus:

".....l'ange des regrets emporte sur son aile,
Pour que notre bonheur ne dure pas toujours
Les rêves de jeunesse et les serments d'amour." 1

He indulges to the full this living-in-the-past in his
poem Reminiscor:

"Oui, je l'aime encor ce temps de folie
Où le vieux Cujas, vaincu par Musset,
S'en allait cacher sa mélancolie
Dans l'ombre où d'ennui Pothier moisissait." 2

In his recollections, even in those which bring
back the bitter days of political intrigue and its
consequent disenchantment, in all of them the poet is
capable of Christian sentiments. The record of his
sufferings is not a chart of a poet's egotism, but
rather the outpourings of resignation, hope, forgive-
ness, mellowness of nature.

He could write lines like the following when he
referred to the illusions of the past:

"Une époque où souvent gémissante et blessée,
Après avoir du ciel où planait sa pensée
Vu fuir les blanches visions
L'âme humaine, égarée aux détours de la route
S'achemine à tâtons dans les sentiers du doute
Veuve de ses illusions. " 3

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| 1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Cent Morceaux Choisis Recueillis | |
| | <u>par Pauline Fréchette, Nuit</u> |
| | <u>d'été</u> P. 72 |
| 2. Ibid | <u>Fleurs Boréales, Reminiscor</u> P. 67 |
| 3. Ibid | Id P. 41 |

The poet was convinced that suffering was not in vain, that 1st lessons bore fruit, that life was richer when it has known the shadow of the cross:

".....les fruits les plus beaux de l'arbre
de la vie
Ont souvent d'amères saveurs! " 1

One last reminder he makes to his godchild:

"Tot ou tard, O mon ange!--et ce sera peut-être
Demain à ton tour de souffrir." 2

And when referring to his own trials and sufferings, he can resignedly write:

"Nous vivons dans un monde où presque tout s'oublie;
Mais il reste toujours quelque chaînon qui lie
Les anges de là-haut aux anges d'ici-bas." 3

If 'hope springs eternal in the human breast', Louis Fréchettes is convinced that it is through the power of God:

"Mais il est un baume odorant
Donné parfois au coeur souffrant
Par Dieu lui-même:
Ce doux baume, trop rare, hélas!
C'est l'assurance que là-bas
Quelqu'un nous aime! " 4

The beautiful comparison that he draws between the birth of spring and hope in the dead leaves of the soul is brought out in 'Renouveau'.

The Author of the nature he loved, sang and exalted, surrounded and filled the life of this French Canadian poet--God's infinity, eternity, immutability, God our last resting when time is no more, makes

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| 1. FRECHETTE, Louis, <u>Fleurs Boréales</u> | P. 41 |
| 2. Ibid <u>Id</u> | P. 42 |
| 3. Ibid <u>Les Oiseaux de Neige,</u> | P. 255 |
| 4. Ibid <u>Fleurs Boréales,</u> | P. 95 |

beautiful his theme of 'Le Premier Janvier'. He understands, as he describes it, the God-filled soul of Marquette, making his lonely voyage into American wilderness and savagery:

"Impatient d'offrir un monde à sa patrie
Et des âmes à l'Eternel!" 1

Friendship played a major role in Fréchettes's life. One has but to read the titles and dedications of his odes and sonnets to appreciate his wide circle of friends. When the reader indulges his poetic curiosity still further, he finds that Fréchette was capable of a deep, sincere generous friendship. It was the songs of friendship which kept the old bard's lyre vibrating when no other strain received response:

"Et si, barde vaincu, parfois je chante encore,
C'est qu'il reste en mon âme une corde sonore
Qui vibrera toujours au nom de l'amitié." 2

In speaking of Fréchette's love for his family, Charles ab der Halden writes:

"Il y a aussi dans M. Fréchette un poète des joies familiales et un brave homme qui se réjouit au milieu des siens, qui ne dédaigne pas, malgré les suffrages des Académies, de composer des pièces de circonstance pour célébrer les événements importants de son petit monde, qui adresse des vers paternels à ses filles le jour de leur première communion, se réjouit au ler de l'an, à la Noël avec la bonne gaité des fêtes familiales." 3

He lived close to his family, enjoying its ties, was

1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Fleurs Boréales P. 5
2. Ibid Les Oiseaux de Neige P.230
3. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de Littérature Canadienne Française P.240

one with its joys and sorrows and in his heart, thanked God for this gift to man:

"Soyez aimé, mon Dieu, vous dont l'omnipotence
A créé la famille, et pour nous rajeunir
Nous donne les enfants, ces fleurs de l'exis-
tence." 1

As we have seen from his writings, Louis Fréchettes was a true picture of the Catholic romantic poet we described in previous chapters. In his sentiments, there is always that uplift which brings the soul nearer to its Creator. Henri D'Arles makes the following comment on this point:

"Même là où il n'est pas question de Dieu ni de religion, la main de l'Eternel est partout visible dans l'oeuvre de notre poète: on la reconnaît à des attouchements soudains et aux élans qu'elle imprime à son génie." 2

And farther on, he continues:

"Fréchettes n'a pas eu à se faire violence pour insérer dans son oeuvre le facteur divin. Peut-être a-t-il surtout vu dans la religion--dans les cérémonies du culte--la première communion, par exemple et dans le rôle du curé de campagne--leur côté extérieur et pittoresque; il était sensible au charme du clocher dans un paysage et à tout ce que le catholicisme met de poésie dans les monuments et dans la vie. C'est qu'il était poète précisément; et l'on n'exige pas d'un poète qu'il pose en théologien." 3

In his own life, he appreciated the guiding Hand of which he wrote in his poem 'l'Amérique':

"Et quand il (Colomb) ne croyait que suivre son étoile
La grande main dans l'ombre orientait le voile," 4

1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Les Oiseaux de Neige, P.234
2. D'ARLES, Henri, Louis Fréchettes, Makers of Canada P.88
3. Ibid Louis Fréchettes, Makers of Canada P.88
4. FRECHETTE, Louis La Légende d'un Peuple "l'Amérique" P. 3

Imperceptibly and unwittingly, Fréchette drew the picture of his own quiet mature years when he wrote of that fiery patriot, Papineau:

"Aux bruits de notre époque il fermait sa grande âme." 1

Was it delicacy on the part of the God of nature to have this nature-poet die, holding in his hands flowers which he so loved? The posies Fréchette wrote about in his delicate poem 'Mon Bouquet' seemed to have had an outward expression in the bouquet he held in death--the grateful heart of the poet kept enshrined the souvenirs of happiness and love which filled his life. In death, he seemed to repeat:

"N'importe, je vous aime, ô reliques bénies,
Restez+là sur mon coeur." 2

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1. FRECHETTE, Louis, Fleurs Boréales, p. 25
 2. Ibid Les Oiseaux de Neige, p. 253

CHAPTER IV

PAMPHILE LE MAY

"J'ai mieux aimé chanter que
jeter l'invective."

Chapter IV Pamphile Le May

"J'ai mieux aimé chanter que jeter l'invective."

In his poem, 'Ultima Verba', the quiet bard who loved his native Lotbinière more than Champlain's city, who found peace and security in the open vistas of nature's beauty and freedom there from the musty sanctuary of a parliamentary library, gives us the real reasons for the fact that he was so loved by his contemporaries and by those who, since know him through his poetry. There is a peaceful winning, a quiet persuasion in his poetry. It uplifts, it consoles, it sympathizes, it reaches the heart of the simple man. Pamphile Le May loved his art and in this love, his poetic genius found melodies which caused men's emotions to vibrate in unison with his. Because his poetry flowed so easily from his lyrical soul, its sincerity appeals and convinces.

Critics have written at length about his works; whatever the diversity of opinion might be, there is this unanimity, all admit that Le May is a romantic poet. Bisson, who had line by line and stanza by stanza, word by word, carefully studied the poet's works to find therein influences of French romanticism, writes:

"Dans les meilleurs de ces sonnets (Les Gouttelles), Le May est vraiment original....il ne

s'agit plus d'un simple imitation, les vers sont sincères et vécus." 1

Others have called him: 'Poète du sentiment, le La-martine du Canada, le roi de l'idyle.' Charles ab der Halden, who is far from sympathetic, concedes however,

"Il y a chez M. Le May, une belle âme triste qu'on devine et qui donne du prix a sa poésie personnelle." 2

Mgr. Camille Roy, more sympathetic in his criticism states:

"Si l'on voulait définir, dès ces débuts lyriques la poésie de Pamphile Le May, il faudrait bien dire qu'elle fut essentiellement romantique." 3

Regardless of how he was to be criticized or categorized later, the poet himself has given as in several instances his own reason for writing. Explicitly, in 1880, at a celebration in honour of Saint John the Baptist, he states that,

"Tout ce qui purifie le coeur, éclaire l'esprit, élève la pensée, rend l'homme plus parfait et le rapproche de son Créateur", 4

should be the objects of all writers. More specifically, he states,

"Nous devons par nos écrits, inspirer l'amour du travail, le respect des lois, le culte des beaux arts." 5

1. BISSON, Laurence Le Romantisme au Canada Français, P.220
2. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la littérature Canadienne Française. P.281
3. ROY, Mgr. Camille, A l'Ombre des Erables P.34
4. AB DER HALDEN, Charles Nouvelles Etudes de la littérature Canadienne Française P: 269
5. ROY, Mgr. Camille, A l'Ombre des Erables P. 57

To Le May, poetry was an avenue to good, a message of persuasion to better living. He considered it, too, as a means of consolation and sympathy, for, in his poem, 'Aux Lecteurs', found in the introduction to 'Les Epis', he clearly gives his unselfish reason for publishing his works:

".....J'ai dépensé mon zèle
A calmer des chagrins au rythme des chansons" 1

He hopes, too, by these same poems to feed the fire of young artists whose ambition has been curbed by jealousy:

"Pour l'âme au soufflet ardent qu'un sort jaloux
esseule
Peut-être seraient-ils l'humble morceau de pain!" 2

Elsewhere, he writes that his poetry, being as it is a mission, must have all the chastity of reason and teach its lesson rather remain a beautifully dressed monument for the admiration of posterity.

"Au sort qui vous attend il faudra vous soumettre,
Vous auriez plus d'éclat, si j'avais osé mettre
Un vêtement pompeux à la simple raison.

Mais la raison est belle en sa nudité chaste.
Gouttelettes, tombez. Tombez, dans le champ
vaste,
Il germera peut-etre une humble floraison." 3

That he writes simply for these reasons, that he was convinced that poetry is its own reward, that he knew

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| 1. | Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Epis Au Lecteur</u> | P. 5 |
| 2. | Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Epis</u> | P. 5 |
| 3. | Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Gouttelettes</u>) | P. 7 |
| | <u>Mes Sonnets</u>) | |

that no filthy lucre would repay him amply, that for him poetry could not be measured in silver coinage, is seen in his 'Epitre à mon ami Sulte'

"L'argent sonne plus fort que la lyre" 1

Thus we see that Le May, regardless of what would be written about him later, let flow from his poetic soul sonnets and lyrics that went to the hearts of men. This very indifference makes his classification as a romanticist possible and won for him the beautiful eulogy of Mgr. Camille Roy:

"On pardonnera beaucoup à l'artiste qui fut parfois trop négligent de sa gloire, et l'on se souviendra toujours de l'idéal de pitié humaine, de douceur bienveillante et de tendresse dont il illumina toute son oeuvre." 2

Because of this freedom, because of this soul-soaring, unfettered by rules and influences of schools, he wrote in the free soulful way of the romantic poets; his very naturalness made him romantic.

However, in spite of this freedom, when we study the life and works of Pamphile Le May, we inevitably place him among the romantic poets:

"Un des plus notables et des plus purs représentants de l'école de Québec patriotique, morale et religieuse." 3

Le May differs in his romanticism from his predecessor, Crémazie, his contemporary Fréchette and from the

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, P. 63
2. ROY, Mgr. C., A l'Ombre des Erables, P.62
3. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Nouvelles Etudes de la Litterature Canadienne-française P. 270

French romanticists whom Bisson would have him imitating so closely. His melancholy is not brought on by voluntary or involuntary exile, but by his own personal sufferings, which, however, he disguises more subtly than did the Lamartine he so much resembles. As Mgr. Roy writes:

"Ce romantisme n'est aucunement troublant et c'est par cette réserve, cette retenue qu'il diffère de celui des maîtres de 1830." 1

Le May, a generation or so removed from the influence of the mother-country, is not so strong in his feelings for her as was Crémazie; the latter's loyalty went to France where that of Le May was directed towards Canada--her prosperity, her loyalty, her grand upbuilding and the beautiful souls of the men and women who composed her. Held against Fréchette's blazing invective, the poetry of Le May is a lullaby,

"J'ai mieux aimé chanter que jeter l'invective," seems to have predominated throughout his writing.

"Le moi, si pareil chez tous ceux qui sont sincères, les rêveries auxquelles ils s'abandonnent avec volupté, les joies ou les regrets dont nos jours se remplissent, l'histoire, la petite surtout, la nature dont les mystères, les couleurs et les harmonies captivent les yeux, voilà l'objet premier et l'objet constant des poésies de Le May." 2

Add to this, the joys and consolations brought to him by his Catholic faith and the moral and physical suf-

1. ROY, Mgr. C., A l'Ombre des Erables, P. 40
2. Ibid Id, P. 35

ferings from which he was never free, and we have all that is desirable in the make-up of a French Canadian romantic poet and none of the ugly weariness which characterized the French romanticist. In our study, we will consider the romanticism of Le May:

1. In the subjects he treated: nature, family joys and sorrows, patriotism, reveries and souvenirs;
2. In the hope which fills his work at all time, the hope that in every Christian is the nostalgia for eternity of which we have already spoken;
3. In suffering, physical and moral
4. In his philosophy of life;
5. In his humane sympathy and compassion;
6. In his sensitivity of soul;
7. In his deep religious convictions;
8. In his treatment of the subject of death;
9. In his means of bringing out this romanticism: appeal to the senses, use of picturesque, well chosen speech, harmony and music, delicacy of expression, strong sincerity.

Extensive as his work is, we have confined ourselves to those volumes of poetry which the more potently bring out this lyrical strain and love of nature: 'Les Gouttelettes', 'Les Epis', 'Les Reflets d'Antan'. According to Bisson, it is in this field, too, that Le May is at his best:

"la manière lyrique est incomparablement supérieure a la manière épique." 1

Or, as his contemporary, Fréchette, has put it:

"Il faut à Le May des sujets doux gracieux, paisibles. Il aime à fouler les pelouses fleuries, et non pas à graver les roches escarpées." 2

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1. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada français. P. 224
 2. LAREAU, Edmond, Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne P. 106

The poetic genius of Le May is romantic by nature. That there should be found in his works subjects and forms similar to those used by the French romanticists is certainly to be expected; the subjects for romantic poetry remain the same in all countries, ages, tongues. Whether consciously or not Le May copied his French masters is a matter of pure conjecture. The 'exotic' that thrilled the soul and quivered the quill of Chateaubriand made a similar impression on Le May; more, he was brought up surrounded by , loving and understanding this glorious Canadian scene upon which the Father of French Romanticism looked as a visitor; it never could have become part and parcel of him as it did Le May. Bisson's detailed comparisons, his scrutiny into Canadian verse to find there traces and semblances with French romanticism is a stiff statistical treatise of the inevitable. However, it is interesting to note how he has standardized LeMay on Lamartine and others:

"Nous relevons uniquement les sonnets dans lesquels se trouvent des influences romantiques: Booz (Hugo-Booz endormi), Le Clocher³ (retour aux thèmes de Lamartine), Ma Mère (Milly, de Lamartine et Vase brisé, de Sully Prud'homme)." 1

Are not these same subjects open to all poets and have they not been treated frequently before and since?

Mgr. Camille Roy has called Le May a mystic.

1. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme au Canada Français, p. 220

Where Francis of Assisi made of nature his brothers and sisters in this universe of God's Love, Le May makes of it a ladder, a lift for his soul to reach his Maker. His nostalgia for eternity finds an outlet in nature. To him, man could offer nature's hymn as a beautiful act of reparation, a pleasing tune to the Ear of the Almighty, making Him forget the discordant notes that exist and making the song of the Cherubim faint:

"Vous murmurez, ruisseaux, nids vous chantez l'aurore;
Champs, vous reverdissez, fleurs, vous allez éclore,
Sans demander jamais de quoi tout cela sert.

O terre, es-tu l'écho d'une orgie insensée?
Que l'homme élève donc le vol de sa pensée?
Et qu'il rende les cieux jaloux de ton concert." 1

And this beautiful hymn of appeasement might be accompanied by the music of the forest,

"Forêt, quand tu te plains, frissonnes ou murmures,
Quand tu grondes, gémis ou chantes, l'oeil humain
Voit un clavier sublime où Dieu pose la main." 2

Not only does nature's harmony offer a tribute to God, but the images which it evokes lifts the soul of the poet to mystic heights of supernal beauty. For instance in a sunset, Le May's soul grasped the perpetual offering of the Eucharist,

"Dans le ciel du couchant, comme un riche ostensor,
soir,
Le soleil avait lui." 3

Or a field of ripe wheat raises his thoughts to the offering of bread, that submission of nature to man and of

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Goutellettes, Le Concert, p.117
 2. Le MAY, Pamphile, Id La Forêt, p.139
 3. Ibid Les Epis, Rayon Lointain, p. 24

man to his--Creator:

"inclines devant moi, blés murs, vos têtes blondes,
Avec le bruit troublant des longs baisers d'adieu,

Et moi, la moisson faite, en habits de dimanche,
J'irai, vieux paysan, pencher ma tête blanche,
Devant l'ostensoir d'or où vous serez mon Dieu." 1

Le May's mystic soul sees in nature the answer to man's
questions, the solution to his moral problems:

"Quand pour chasser loin d'elle un voile de brumes,
L'âme demande un souffle et que l'orage vient,
Elle ne chante pas, mais elle se souvient." 2

He sees there, too, the reflections of blight caused
by coldness in the heart of man:

"Tous les coeurs sont des nids où chante l'espér-
ance
Et les flocons de neige, avec indifférence
Des coeurs comme des nids font taire les chansons" 3

Nature is an alms from heaven, giving man courage, a
new lease on life:

"La terre, semble-t-il, va se diviniser,
Reprends, barde plaintif, ta lyre qui se rouille,
La floraison des coeurs devrait s'éterniser." 4

In Nature's odours, too, does the poet perceive the
beauty and odour of virtue born of suffering:

"Comme le foin tombé sous l'acier qui le fouille,
L'âme du malheureux que l'épreuve agenouille
Autour d'elle répand de suaves odeurs." 5

Le May knew and understood nature as few
poets do--he loved it, he only half-lived when he was
not living in the midst of it; its moods, its caprices,

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Goutellettes, Les Blés, p.140
 2. Ibid Id L'Orage, p.142
 3. Ibid Id Coeurs et Nids, p.181
 4. Ibid Id L'Aumone du Ciel, p.127
 5. Ibid Id Fensaison, p.137

its odours, its sounds--all were innately part of him. His questioning of the majestic Saint Lawrence in "Si tu pouvais parler" is one of intimacy. His verse flows with all the majesty of the powerful, silent river. On the contrary, when he writes, "La Descente des Iroquois dans l'Ile d'Orléans", all the savagery of the brutal attack is enhanced by the understanding descriptions of nature given by the poet. There is no limit to all the examples of this nature-love and nature-understanding to be found in the works of our poet. Suffice it to say that LeMay was convinced that nature has a soul and that it vibrates with the soul of man:

"L'âme de la forêt fait place à l'âme humaine." 1
How could a poet so infused with love of nature be anything but romantic?

"Le bonheur se fabrique avec d'humbles outils." 2

The simple joys of home life offer Le May a clear passage into the hearts of men and win for him a coveted place in the love of his contemporaries. His home, his country, his mother, wife and children, the tree he saw grow, the village church bells, the haying, the harvest, the play of children, in a word, nothing was too simple, too insignificant to touch the heart of the poet if it meant anything to some living person.

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Goutellettes, Les Colons, p.122
2. Ibid Id Bonheur facile, p.116

He summarizes the role of the village church bell:

"Some les longs adieux, sonne les longs sanglots." 1

However, throughout these poems, there is the melancholy strain characteristic of romantic poets, characteristic of Le May. When he writes about his mother, the poet says of his heart:

"D'un aile infatigable, un rêve doux le rase.
Dieu lui verse en secret ivresses et douleurs,
Et quand il est trop plein on voit tomber des
pleurs." 2

His advice to his children is serious:

"Enfants, n'ayez point peur de monter au calvaire,
L'épreuve fortifiée.....Ayez peur du bonheur." 3

Characteristic of all noble souls, that of Le May is able to embrace more than his home, his village. Canada, his country, is frequently the subject of his verse. As we have seen above, its betterment was the purpose of his writing.

Unlike Fréchette, whose patriotism was one of fire and who would more likely be considered fanatical, Le May's quiet reasonable love of his country would win admirers, lovers for his Canada, for the French nation within it. A note of sublimity, typical of the Catholic romanticist, enters into the patriotism of Le May; it is made up of charity without revenge:

"La vengeance des morts, c'est l'amour des vivants,"
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| 1. | Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , <u>La Cloche</u> , p.50 |
| 2. | Ibid <u>Id</u> <u>Ma Mère</u> , p.82 |
| 3. | Ibid <u>Id</u> <u>A Mes Enfants</u> , p.84 |
| 4. | Ibid <u>Id</u> <u>A Mercier</u> , p.63 |

"Il nous faut oublier la haine et l'abandon:
L'abandon de la France et la haine saxonne,
Si l'heure de la paix est beinç l'heure qui sonne,
Meurs, ferment de discorde. Espoir, reprends ton vol!"
1

justice molded by tolerance,

"Homme ou peuple est béni qui va par droit chemin!"
2
submission to the conquerors blended with the nobility
of man:

"Nous les frères nouveaux de nos anciens vainqueurs!"
3
"Ce long délaissement, le mépris, la jactance,
Ont jeté d'amers deuils sur notre humble existence,
Nul ne peut ignorer cela;
Mais sans apostasie, et ni tâches, ni traîtres,
Nous sommes devenus les égaux de nos maîtres
Car l'âme chrétienne était là!" 4

ambition tempered with humility, bravery and glory to a
cause seasoned with uprighteous indignation;

".....et porte
Le drapeau de la gloire avec humilité. 5

"O peuple, si tu fais de tes droits l'abandon,
.....
Tu descends promptement au gouffre de l'oubli;
De tes soldats tombés nul ne garde mémoire
Et ton drapeau muet ne chante aucune gloire." 6

loyalty to a mother country based on honesty and truth of
opinion,

"La France se taisait. Une trompeuse fée
Scellait de ses baisers la bouche de son roi." 7

Let us summarize le May's beautiful patriotism, the love
of country, a preparation for love of our final home as he

himself does in 'Hymne National':

1.	Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Reflets d'Antan</u> ,	In Concordia Salus, p.195
2.	Ibid <u>Les Epis</u>	Par Droits Chemins p. 57
3.	Ibid Id	Queen Victoria, p. 48
4.	Ibid Id	L'âme Chrétienne, p.196
5.	Ibid <u>Les Goutelletes</u> ,	Laurier, p. 62
6.	Ibid <u>Reflets d'Antan</u> ,	La Mort de Chénier p.183
7.	Ibid <u>Les Epis</u>	Par droit chemin, p. 57

"Je t'aime, ô sol natal! je t'aime et te révère!
Que Dieu verse sur toi ses bienfaits les plus doux.
Jusqu'au jour où le ciel deviendra notre terre,
La terre où nous vivons doit être un ciel pour
nous." 1

To all intent and purpose, the works of Le May would lead us to believe that he was convinced that,

"En commençant la vie, on commence le rêve." 2

Some of his most beautiful poems found existence in this romantic luxury of dreams, visions and fantasies. As the poet grows older, he loves to think of the days when he was younger,

"La jeunesse fleurit partout. Lui seul est vieux
.....
Une larme descend de son grand oeil atave,
Quand il songe qu'un jour il fit des envieux." 3

In addressing himself to a tree grown old, he makes the statement:

"J'aime à me souvenir des nids que j'ai bercés," 4

which bring back pictures of sweet contentment and home joys. Le May admits the cruel, yet pleasing sensations he enjoys in his dreams:

"Mon coeur ressemble au nid que la bise fait taire.
Rameaux, ne bercez plus l'humble nid solitaire,
Ne bercez plus mon coeur, ô mes rêves aimés!" 5

So convinced is he of truths like the following,

"Mais nul ne me saisit, car je suis le passé," 6

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| 1. Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Reflets d'antan</u> Hymne National, p.205 | |
| 2. Ibid | <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , A mes Enfants, p. 84 |
| 3. Ibid | Id Le Vieillard, p.115 |
| 4. Ibid | |
| 5. Ibid | <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , Le Nid, p.128 |
| 6. Ibid | Id Le Passé, p.194 |

that the poet believes more than half of life is built on memory; hence he feels justified in describing the past, in living among souvenirs,

"Jour après jour s'effrange,
L'avenir, chose étrange,
Vient bientôt et tout change.
On vit du souvenir." 1

Despite his frequent imaginative voyages into and consoling visions of the past, the poetry of Pamphile Le May, so Catholic in its mysticism, is full of the Christian virtue of hope--a hope built on suffering, on disappointment, on experience--not an infused hope only but a motivated, practical, bold hope. There is never, even where the strain of melancholy is most pronounced, the black despair, the futility of all things as is found in the French Romanticists. The Canadian Romanticist is a Christian, a God-fearing man, a man of hope, a man with a destiny. If he met with betrayal of trust in life, he was well able to write:

"Et les parvis divins n'ont pas de trahisons." 2

Has the poet as basis for his hope the fact that earth can share in some measure the happiness of eternity?

"Un élan poussé à Dieu la nature féconde,
Et le rire du ciel s'égrène sur le monde." 3

The rushing of a stream towards its destiny awakens in his soul, the hope of his own destiny.

"Nos âmes, a tous deux, seront vite allées,
L'une au fleuve profond, l'autre à l'éternité"4

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, Souffle Printannier, p.19
2. Ibid Les Goutelletes, A Lusignan, p.68
3. Ibid Id Le Réveil, p.125
4. Ibid Id Le Ruisseau, p.132

In the crippling of his work of writing poetry, the hope of eternity was a means of consoling him, there at last would be freedom of soul,

"Nous ne jugerons plus les choses de travers:
Nous boirons la lumière et chanterons nos vers." 1

To look on all things with the knowledge of God's eternity keeps a Christian's hope high; Le May infuses his ideas into us by writing:

"Ta créature, O Dieu, ne meurt pas tout entière;
Ton oeuvre est éternelle, et tu ne détruis rien." 2

It is in the lines of his beautiful "Ultima Verba" that Le May gives us his unbounded confidence in the God he loved and served:

"Ai-je accompli le bien que toute vie impose?
Je ne sais. Mais l'espoir en mon âme repose,
Car je sais les bontés du Dieu que j'ai suivi." 3

Closely allied with his hope is the poet's love of and resignation in suffering. At no time in his life was Le May free from physical suffering and a soul as sensitive, as upright and as noble as his, was bound to be buffeted and bruised by the deceptions, illusions, meanness which comes into a mortal life. Le May calmly admits his suffering; his poetry is indeed more beautiful because of it, but there is nowhere complaint, loss of confidence, disgust nor discouragement with human nature; the agonizing 'cri du coeur' is muffled; suffering is borne silently and poured out on the literary world in

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, Epitre à mon ami B.Sulte,

2. Ibid Id Le Jour des morts, p.63
3. Ibid Gouttelettes Ultima Verba, p.236
p.227

the sweetness of verse conceived in pain.

The poet well knew that life meant suffering:

"Vivre, enfants, c'est aimer et souffrir un instant." 1

"On traverse la vie au milieu de l'angoisse." 2

"La douleur est trop vraie et le bonheur trop faux." 3

"Ton coeur, comme le mien, vieil arbre, a donc souffert!" 4

However, suffering brings its own consolation. First, it is a source of happiness:

"Vous avez vu, pourtant, plus d'une âme sereine,
Accepter la souffrance en souriant au ciel." 5

Secondly, it mellows, beautifies and renders more sympathetic the character of the sufferer, giving him even a more beautiful physical appearance:

"Et ces yeux, si divers par l'éclat et le charme
Seront plus beaux encore et deviendront pareils
Quand ils regarderont à travers une larme." 6

Thirdly, it ennobles characters and makes them more self-reliant by not imposing their griefs on others:

"Comme l'âme qui souffre, on te voit souvent seule." 7

Among the sources of suffering, Le May writes about the loss of friendship--that friendship which,

".....met un point rose
Dans le voile noir de l'ennui?" 8

Its advent brings a rosy warmth to life, but its withdrawal, a renewal of pain:

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| 1. | Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , A Mes Enfants, p. 84 |
| 2. | Ibid Id La Traversée, p 217 |
| 3. | Ibid <u>Les Epis</u> , Epitre à mon ami B. Sulte, p. 63 |
| 4. | Ibid <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , A un pommier, p. 138 |
| 5. | Ibid Id Le Bonheur, p. 53 |
| 6. | Ibid Id Les Yeux, p. 192 |
| 7. | Ibid Id Ame et Fleur, p. 204 |
| 8. | Ibid <u>Les Epis</u> , A une jeune amie, p. 88 |

"Et pourtant je ne sais quel regret nous empoigne
Quand au soir de la vie une amitié s'éloigne,
Une espérance meurt, un doux rêve se fond." 1

He has known the sadness brought about by coldness:

"Tous les coeurs sont des nids où chante l'espérance
Et les flocons de neige, avec indifférence
Des coeurs comme des nids font taire les chansons." 2

Had Le May been imbued with the love of parading his suffering he would have done so because he admits that it is a consolation to speak about it, a consolation of which he deprived himself throughout his life for the most part:

"Peut-être qu'on va rire en entendant ceci,
Et croire que je fais de mes maux étalage;
En se communiquant la peine se soulage;
Dites-moi, coeurs broyés, s'il n'en est pas ainsi?" 3

"Je ne jetterai plus ni plaintes ni sarcasmes,
Je veux sourire encor. La terre a des miasmes
Mais elle a des parfums qui les font oublier." 3

How we love and admire the Christian virtue of silent suffering as borne out in writings such as these! From a literary point of view, does it not invite more interest in a poetry which has flowed from an unknown source of suffering and brought to the readers consolation and peace born in the courage of the poet? When the poet writes lines like the following,

"Et ces yeux, si divers par l'éclat et le charme,
Seront plus beaux encore et deviendront pareils
Quand ils regarderont à travers une larme!" 4

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Goutellettes, Résignation, p.92
 2. Ibid Id Coeurs et Nids, p.181
 3. Ibid Id Epanchement, p. 87
 4. Ibid Id Les Yeux, p.192

he convinces the reader in a quiet persuasive way of the beauty of soul and serenity of expression, the fruits of suffering quietly borne. Le May may have had in mind that poetry should be didactic; even so, there is a sweet compulsion in it that influences the reader by its very beauty.

The truly Christian poet is a profound thinker. From the mental researches he makes and the philosophy of life to which he adheres, his pen gives the world thought-provoking lines in a language ^{far} more attractive ~~far~~ than that of the cold philosopher. Our poet, sitting back-stage of life, as it were, writes to the world from ~~out~~ his quiet country home, his philosophical findings: first, the selfishness of the world:

".....Je vois le monde tel qu'il est,
Egoïste d'abord, puis, ensuite, assez laid.
Il m'attriste, le monde, et pourtant, il m'amuse."1

second, the false values accepted in our materialistic world:

"L'argent sonne plus fort que la lyre" 1

third, the vanity of life's happiness,

"La douleur est trop vraie et le bonheur trop faux." 2

fourth, the vanity of praise, the inconstancy of men,

"L'autre jour, ce chemin où son pied meurtri saigne
Était jonché de fleurs." 3

"J'ai mendié la gloire et sous mes mains tannées
La plume a de vains mots, la lyre a de vains sons;

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, Epître à mon ami B. Sulte, p.63

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

Id La Mort du Christ, p.150

"J'ai mendié les biens et toutes mes moissons
Ont été par l'envie ou la haine vannées." 1

fifth, the flight of time, the knowledge that the present only is ours:

"Adieu, bel an qui fuis pour ne plus revenir,
Qui fuis comme un torrent que rien ne peut tenir!
Adieu, toi qui déjà n'es plus qu'un souvenir." 2

sixth, true happiness, because of man's immortal soul is not found in this life,

"Et le jeune homme en vain, l'éclair dans la paupière
Debout sur les sommets des collines de pierre
Recule l'horizon.....le bonheur est plus loin." 3

These are but a few of the beautifully written and quietly lived words of wisdom from Le May, the poetic philosopher. And lest the vanity, the emptiness of this world should discourage his readers, counterbalancing these hard truths are the consolations that give lift to the Christian soul:

"Il n'est donc ici-bas nulle paix souveraine,
Vous avez vu, pourtant, plus d'une âme sereine
Accepter la souffrance en souriant au ciel." 4

With this calm philosophy of life there is written into the poetry of Pamphile Le May, high standards of morality. Unlike the modern, demi-pagan writers, to him sin is possible and real because of our free will and it is punishable; virtue is its own reward and the soul of man, given to the propensities of evil left in it by original sin, knows the struggle between good and evil.

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Goutellettes, Le Mendiant, p.56
2. Ibid Les Epis, Adieu à l'an qui fuit, p.210
3. Ibid Les Goutellettes, Plus Loin, p.111
4. Ibid Id Le Bonheur, p. 53

In all his poetry, this morality is evident, but perhaps more so in his treatment of Biblical subjects. For example in "Eve", we read the struggle of the human will,

"Moi, je n'obéis pas car je ressemble à Dieu!" 1

in "La Mer Morte, the penalty that sin must pay

"N'es-tu pas faite, ô mer! des pleurs de tes damnés?"2

in "Samson", the weakness of an unworthy love,

"Qui l'a vaincu, ce fort?...Le baiser d'une femme! 3

Because of this deep knowledge and understanding of man, there is in the poetry of Lé May a sympathy for human frailty and suffering that is very touching. He alone can write lines like the following when he describes a woman who becomes insane in her sorrow,

"N'allez pas la troubler. Laissez-lui l'espérance et
jamais
L'être aimé qu'elle appelle en se penchant sur l'onde
Ne viendra dans ses mains poser sa tête blonde." 4

In his poem "Agar et Ismael", this trait is brought out in his understanding and kind treatment of Agar's sufferings.

The bard of Lotbinière was not merely a Sunday Catholic. All his poetry bespeaks his faith, but there are poems which show us more intimately the truly Christ-like soul of the poet. It is with a sacred reverence and awesome ecstasy that we read and study these. His "Sonnets Evangéliques" are pregnant of his personal love of Christ; they are the fruits of meditation and are born

1. Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Goutellettes</u> , "Eve",	p. 11
2. Ibid Id La Mer Morte,	p. 15
3. Ibid Id Samson,	p. 19
4. Ibid <u>Les Epis</u> , Folle,	p. 73

of the poet's deep spirituality. He delicately treats of the sanctity of Christ in lines like the following:

"Le lis garde toujours le parfum du baiser." 1

".....Ils ne savaient donc pas
Qu'en s'approchant de Dieu l'amour se purifie." 2

".....En vain elle luttait,
Des pleurs de repentir luirent dans ses prunelles." 3

He glories in his personal need of the suffering Christ,

"Le Christ au front sanglant reste sur la croix
noire
Hier je l'ai vu là, demain je l'y verrai,
Car j'ai besoin qu'il parle à mon coeur éploré." 4

and in the necessity of grace to overcome temptation,

".....Le feu court dans mes veines
Et ma bouche se tait. Mes prières sont vaines,
Devant Dieu je suis nu! 5

The church, the Spouse of Christ, is full of mystic meaning and consolations for the poet. Of the sanctuary lamp, he writes,

"Comme un souvenir pur, quand une amitié fuit,
Elle illumine l'âme où la nuit est venue". 6

Because of his strong faith in what the grain of wheat is destined to be, the sincere Catholic poet can write lines such as these:

"Quand le brise s'élève, en flexions profondes,
Inclinez devant moi, blés murs, vos têtes blondes,
Avec le bruit troublant des longs baisers d'adieu.
Et moi, la moisson faite, en habits du dimanche
J'irai, vieux paysan, pencher ma tête blanche
Devant l'ostensoir d'or où vous serez mon Dieu." 7

1. Le MAY, Pamphile,	<u>Les Goutellettes</u> ,	Les Lis,	p. 27
2. Ibid	Id	Magdeliene,	p. 30
3. Ibid	Id	La Samaritaine,	p. 32
4. Ibid	<u>Les Epis</u> ,	Le Calvaire,	p. 154
5. Ibid	Id	Tentation,	p. 217
6. Ibid	<u>Les Goutellettes</u> ,	La Lampe du Sanctuaire,	p. 49
7. Ibid	Id	Les Blés,	p. 140

When this spiritual poet writes of death-- and he makes frequent allusions to it so enraptured is he with eternity, so full of that heavenly nostalgia to which we have already referred--it is with the delicacy of a Saint Francis of Assisi, the great poet saint. Although Le May may speak of the world as 'un vaste tombeau', still his faith adds:

"Ta créature, ô Dieu, ne meurt pas tout entière;
Ton oeuvre est éternelle et tu ne détruis rien."1

Crémazie's poems on death are perhaps his best; certainly they are his most realistic. Le May treats the subject with less physical vigour and realism but with more delicacy, more spirituality, more hope and confidence. To him, death is the bringing to perfection of all noble things attempted in this life:

"Pour que le coeur s'échauffe à tes divins fièvres,
Pour que ton nom muet monte à toutes lèvres,
O poète, il te manque une chose: mourir." 2

To him, death is the great solvent, the price we must pay for all life. Here is how he interprets the saying, 'Nothing dies but something lives':

"C'est le prix des moissons que va mûrir l'été.
Nul n'y songe peut-être, et nul ne s'en effraie,
Toute vie est, hélas! un bien que la mort paie!"3

In dealing with so many subjects typical of

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, Le Jour des Morts, p.236
 2. Ibid Les Goutellettes, A..... p. 66
 3. Ibid Id Le Labourage, p.129

the romanticists, Le May uses also the romanticist means of writing lyrical poetry. He uses the sensuous appeal characteristic of Keats. In his poem, "Le retour aux champs", he brings it out thus:

"Il me fallait revoir.....le laboureur,
Il me fallait l'odeur du foin, du trefle,
Il me fallait le jour pour voir combien de voiles
S'ouvrent blanches sur le flot bleu;
Il me fallait la nuit, pour voir combien d'étoiles
S'allument sous les pieds de Dieu.
Il me fallait encore entendre l'harmonie
Des nids qui berce le rameau,
Il me fallait entendre encore la voix bénie
Des vieux clochers de mon hameau!" 1

All his senses, smothered in the musty environment of a parliamentary library, longed for the realization of being in nature; the poet missed 'les douces fleurs des vallées, les roses au front nu, les forêts échevellées, les vagues des flots, les petits oiseaux' and when he filled his soul with this sensuous beauty, he knew well how to let others enjoy it in his poetry and use it as a hymn of praise, as for example in the two stanzas:

"Vous murmurez, ruisseaux, nids vous chantez l'aurore,
Champs, vous reverdissez, fleurs vous allez éclore,
Sans demander jamais de quoi tout cela sert.

O terre, es-tu l'écho d'une orgie ensensée?
Que l'homme élève donc le vol de sa pensée
Et qu'il rende les cieux jaloux de ton concert!" 2.

Besides this sensuous appeal, Le May's poetry is full of picturesque, well chosen expressions, which visualize in delicate tableaux what the poet wishes to describe. Here

1. LeMAY, Pamphile, Les Epis Le retour aux champs, p.21
2. Ibid Les Goutellettes, Le Concert, p.117

are but a few examples:

"Le vin ne verse pas ses rubis en cascades,
Mais la fontaine dort sous de fraîches arcades." 1

"Se berçait comme un cygne aux longs baisers du vent." 2

"Ces fronts qui s'inclinaient, c'était me semble-t-il
Comme les lourds épis, ou comme le blond mil
Lorsque passe le vent." 3

".....et le pâtre rêveur
Vit un rayon de Dieu flotter, comme une écharpe." 4

"A le plaintif accent du filet argenté
Qui cherche son chemin dans les rides des pierres." 5

Le May's poetry sings, sometimes in light silvery tones, sometimes in dull weary notes as the mood of the poet demands. When he describes historical facts or battles, his lines are heavy, serious; when he writes of nature, his verses sing the songs of nature itself; when he treats of eternity, of Christ, of the sacraments, his verses take on a note of psalmody, of reverence. Perhaps, of all our earlier poets, he has best used the music of poetry, even though he has been criticized for his lack of the polished, well-finished verse. In his defense, Mgr. Camille Roy has written:

".....il suppléa, aux artifices par la sincérité jaillissante et candide de sa poésie.....il ex-prime par dessus tout son âme vibrante: le lyrisme du coeur vaut encore celui des règles!" 6

Louis Fréchette writes of his contemporary:

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| 1. Le MAY, Pamphile, <u>Les Epis</u> , Chez Nous, | p.36 |
| 2. Ibid Id, Folle, | p.73 |
| 3. Ibid Id. Vision, | p.188 |
| 4. Ibid Id Bethléhem, | p.145 |
| 5. Ibid <u>Reflets d'Antan</u> , La Découverte du Canada, | p. 7 |
| 6. ROY, Mgr. Camille, A l'ombre des Erables | p.31 |

".....son vers est toujours coulant, facile, harmonieux, bien jeté; sa strophe est simple, moelleuse, agréable, peu hardie, mais bien finie, peu imitative, mais toujours suave." 1

Coupled with this musical flow of poetry is the delicacy of expression found so frequently in the poems in which a light touch is required:

"Je partirai sans bruit comme un roseau qui brise
Le pied d'une alouette ou l'aile d'une brise." 2

"Vous tremblez, mes pauvrets, comme une larme aux
cils
Comme aux yeux, l'aveu, comme aussi la rosée
Qu'un baiser de l'aurore a, sans bruit déposée
Sur le feuillage vert, tout plein de gais babils."3

In his sonnets, so many of his last lines have such a lilting uplift that were it for this line of poetry alone, Le May would live forever in the hearts of those who love his poetry.

Sensuous, picturesque, musical and delicate as his expressions may be, Le May knows well how to be strong, candid, sincere, virile when his subject requires such treatment, for example in his condemnation of Colbourne:

"Et l'aigle, il était là! Non, c'était le vautour
Qui venait d'arrêter son vol sur l'humble tour.
Et le temple, ce nid du bon Dieu sur la terre,
Allait être meurtri sans pitié dans sa serre
C'était là ta revanche, ô vieil orgueil saxon.
Et le frisson de joie après l'âpre frisson." 4

Or, when he appeals for peace, for love rather than hate, he speaks with the sincerity of a true patriot:

"Béni le souverain qui règne par l'amour;

1. LAREAU, Edmond, Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne P. 123
2. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Epis, Epitre à Sulte P. 63
3. Ibid Les Goutellettes, Mes Sonnets, Introduction P. 7
4. Ibid Reflets d'Antan, La Mort de Chénier P.191

La justice est sa loi; sa force est la clémence.
La liberté qu'ailleurs on rêve dans les fers,
Sur son empire heureux étends ses rameaux verts.

Il nous faut oublier la haine et l'abandon:
L'abandon de la France et la haine saxonne;
Si l'heure de la paix est bien l'heure qui sonne,
Meurs, ferment de discorde. Espoir, reprends ton
vol." 1

All the beauty, the riches, the spirituality, the human sympathy, the beautiful qualities of heart and mind of Pamphile Le May have not been exploited in this chapter. Suffice it to say that he has proved himself a romanticist in every way possible and the most original and far-reaching romanticist of the early Quebec poets. The last stanzas of his last poem "Ultima Verba" summarize these romantic traits once more for us: lyrical subjects, Catholic nostalgia, Christian philosophy, love of nature and its sensuous beauty, and of his fellow beings, and a hope that brought him joyously to the eternity towards which his life and verse were always directed.

"Que le souffle d'hiver emporte, avec la feuille,
Mes chants et mes sanglots d'un jour! Je me re-
cueille
Et je ferme mon coeur aux voix qui l'ont ravi.

Ai-je accompli le bien que toute vie impose?
Je ne sais. Mais l'espoir en mon âme repose,
Car je sais les bontés du Dieu que j'ai servi." 2

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1. Le MAY, Pamphile, Les Reflets d'Antan, In concordia Salus, p.195
 2. Ibid Les Goutellettes, Ultima Verba, p.227

CHAPTER V

WILLIAM CHAPMAN

"Et c'est souvent ainsi qu'un
poète rêveur--
--Pendant qu'au lac divin de
l'art il boit la vie
Et sent frémir en lui le souffle
créateur--
Est épié dans l'ombre et frappé par
l'envie."

Chapter V William Chapman.

"Et c'est souvent ainsi qu'un poète rêveur--
--Pendant qu'au lac divin de l'art il boit la vie
Et sent frémir en lui le souffle créateur--
Est épié dans l'ombre et frappé par l'envie."

All the romantic genius of William Chapman lies embedded in these lines, as it does in so much of his poetry--dreams of the past and of the future, souvenirs of love and youth, aspirations towards great poetic art, the presence everywhere of the Creator, the ugly mark of jealousy and thwarted ambition, psychological impressions evoked by an incident in nature. Perhaps no critic has summarized as well as Herman Bastien, in his 'Témoignages', the literary ability of the poets we are studying. The author speaks of them as 'la lyre de Crémazie, le clairon de Fréchette, le régionalisme de Le May, l'éloquence de Chapman.' Chapman's wordiness very often makes of his poetry a ceremonial oration; it never reaches the lyrical fineness of Crémazie, its heaviness keeps it well below the graceful heights of Fréchette's soaring and nature never brings out in it, the quiet psychology so uplifting in Le May. Chapman loses by comparison with these poets. Nevertheless, he did drink 'au lac divin de l'art'; his poetry has much

that is beautiful and he ranks well among the romanticist bards of Quebec's early literature.

Critics are unanimous in making Chapman a fervent disciple of Hugo:

"Ceux qui se distinguent le plus par le romantisme ce sont Fréchette; Chapman et Le May; mais tandis que les deux premiers s'apparentent à Hugo, celui-ci c'est à Lamartine." 1

Harry Bernard, in his 'Essais Critiques' gives, as strong influences upon 'cette curieuse trilogie que formaient en se ressemblant, Fréchette, Chapman et Pamphile Le May,' for Fréchette, Hugo and Theuriet, Chapman, Hugo and Pailleron. Despite the fact that Chapman formally and vehemently resented being known as 'l'émule de M. Fréchette he admits his preferences for the same French authors and Arnould, without any apology, writes:

"Il continue visiblement M. Fréchette, c'est pourquoi il ne s'entendit pas avec lui, semblant inconsciemment lui reprocher de l'avoir devancé dans la vie, mais avec lui, il se réconcilia sur sa tombe d'une manière touchante." 2

From among the poets we are studying, none seems to have been for literary critics the target that Chapman became. Was it his own violent criticism of Louis Fréchette, his master and superior, that attracted towards himself the signal for literary bombardment?

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1. DANDURAND, l'Abbe Albert, La poésie Canadienne-Français P. 104
 2. ARNOULD, Louis, Nos Amis les Canadiens P. 162

J. Geddes writes:

"'Le Lauréat' was a personal attack upon a distinguished man" 1

Chapman lost sympathy even among his contemporaries by his abuse of Louis Fréchette. Certainly, a sentence like the following from 'Deux Copains' is a self-condemnation and a self-abasement on the part of Wm. Chapman:

"M. Fréchette est l'un des plus grands menteurs qui aient jamais tenu une plume dans n'importe quel pays du monde." 2

He lost sympathy also among American readers by his expressed hatred of them in his poem 'A propos de la guerre hispano-américaine'. Geddes, himself an American, writes about this poem:

"The intensity of the feeling of hatred towards Americans throughout this poem kills for them whatever charm the production may have on verse. It may possibly be spoken of more pleasantly by Spaniards." 3

Mgr. Camille Roy reproaches Chapman for having written and published 'Les Aspirations' in France, but he forgives him later:

"C'est d'ailleurs une piété, toute filiale qui a inspiré le dessein et les démarches de M. Chapman et qui l'a fait dédier à ses deux mères, à celle qui dort au cimetière sous 'le sol que mai parfume' et à la France 'qui se souvient', l'oeuvre qu'il avait si laborieusement préparée. M. Chapman aime la France." 4

Halden refuses the responsibility of conferring on him

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| 1. GEDDES, J. <u>The Language and Literature of a Past Decade.</u> | P.44 |
| 2. CHAPMAN, Wm. <u>Deux Copains</u> | P.84 |
| 3. GEDDES, J. <u>The Language and Literature of a Past Decade</u> | P.58 |
| 4. ROY, Mgr. Camille, <u>Poètes de Chez Nous.</u> | P.136 |

the honour of being Canada's national poet:

"Si vous voulez être équitable pour M. Chapman, donnez-lui une place parmi les écrivains dont la virtuosité ne répond pas aux intentions et qui ont parfois des lueurs. Mais en faire votre poète national, c'est une plaisanterie qui retombera sur vous. Prétendre que telle est l'opinion française, et se servir de notre jugement pour imposer ce grand homme à ses compatriotes, c'est une mystification. Nous refusons d'être complice."

When writing about his style, Dandurand concludes:

"Ce style a du souffle, mais il manque un peu de chaleur; on n'y sent guère des accents d'une émotion intime, mais la rhétorique et l'afflatus oratoire." 2

In the same vein Mgr. C. Roy writes:

"M. Chapman est orateur....il se laisse emporter au courant d'une phraséologie creuse et sonore.. alors des langueurs et des strophes languissantes où la prose se fourvoie dans les vers et les remplit de son verbiage facile." 3

Mgr. Chartier adds to this criticism:

"L'adjectif tintamarresque, dont l'abus gâte l'oeuvre entier de Chapman, devient à la mode." 4

After studying the various critics, friendly and otherwise, we find that they condemn in Chapman faults like the following:

1. An exaggerated verbosity, which shows itself in an overdevelopment of ideas, in enumerations which tend to become banal and tedious, in long drawn-out lines and sentences;
2. Too frequent use of comparisons, parallels,

1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Nouvelles Etudes de Littérature Canadienne Française. P.265
2. DANDURAND, l'Abbe Albert, La Poésie Canadienne Française P. 91
3. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Poètes de Chez Nous P.154
4. CHARTIER, Mgr. Emile, Vie de l'esprit. P.123

- antithesis, allegory and ~~p~~eriphrase;
3. Lack of precision and clearness of flow of poetry (souplesse), of continuity and sustained inspiration, of taste in comparisons, of variety of expression, of substance, of imagination;
 4. Heaviness;
 5. An oratorical style that is not poetical;
 6. A vaporous cloudiness, the results of an abundance of words for a paucity of ideas and a lack of philosophical thinking.

Charles ab der Halden accuses Chapman of:

"une crime de lèse-poésie, la platitude." 1

and Mgr. C. Roy gives him credit for little real poetry:

"Ces pièces de vers où le sentiment est vif, bien ramassé et délicatement exprimé sont peu nombreuses dans le livre de M. Chapman." 2

Arnould feels justified in adding to the criticism already given, the following statement:

"La jeune école littéraire lui reproche ses négligences de forme avec une critique aussi âpre que celle dont il lui-même use envers Louis Fréchette" 3

And we have but to quote here a couple of stanzas of his poem 'L'Aurore' for an example of the use of words dear to the heart of Chapman and worn out by him in his poetry:

"La brume, qui voilait le fluide crystal

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| 1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, | <u>Nouvelles Etudes</u> | P.262 |
| 2. ROY, Mgr. Camille, | <u>Poètes de Chez Nous</u> | P.148 |
| 3. ARNOULD, Louis, | <u>Nos Amis Les Canadiens</u> | P.165 |

De ses plis opalins, dont la blancheur éclate,
S'envole sous le feu du flambeau matinal.
Et rougissant lame aux châtoiments d'agate,
Le soleil qui se lève, ardent et triomphal
Sur l'horizon déroule une écharpe écarlate." 1

However, despite the flow of criticism and the fact that Chapman is given credit for having written but little real poetry, still what he did write is generally acknowledged to have been of the romantic type. According to the literary hierarchy into which Bernard places our poets, if Chapman is the disciple of Crémazie and all three were influenced by Victor Hugo, then certainly, we are in a position to place Chapman among the French Canadian romanticists. Almost unanimously the critics concede the following lyrical tendencies to Chapman: romantic influence, expressions of strong pictorial realism, a great patriotism based on love of Canada and of France, a Lamartinian treatment of nature whereby the poet describes nature only to fall back on it in meditation and reverie, a subjective lyricism where either the poet himself or the character he depicts gives utterance to the poet's feelings, the Catholic nostalgia that brings the poet through nature to God.

Chapman then is a French Canadian romanticist because we find, in studying his works and the literary

1. CHAPMAN, Wm. Les Fleurs de Givre, l'Aurore P.169

criticisms of his enemies even,

1. That the subjects he treats are of a personal, moral, religious nature;
2. That his literary training and tendency is romanticist;
3. That his treatment of nature, although at times epical, is in general lyrical and subjective;
4. That from nature he reaches to God in the way of the Catholic romanticist;
5. That his heart speaks in his patriotic poems;
6. That the themes: death, suffering and human sympathy prevail in his meditative works;
7. That his narrative poems, of which he has written many, are also of a romantic lyrical nature.

There are many poems in which Chapman is subjective. From them we learn much of the poet's likes and dislikes, fears and desires, lofty sentiments and shame, joys and sorrows, sympathies and aversions.

"J'ai fait dans la retraite un livre austère et chaste,
J'ai chanté pour le Christ et pour la vérité,
J'ai mis dans mes accents toute la probité
Qu'épancha dans le mien ton coeur enthousiaste.

Pour aider les souffrants, souvent avec ma lyre,
Je suis allé frapper à la porte des coeurs." 1

In this poem of dedication, the poet gives us his lofty aspirations and reasons for writing verse, namely praise of Christ and truth, and appeasement of suffering humanity.

The romanticist strain made him write in sympathy towards Chopin, the musical romanticist. Here, he

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Aspirations, A mes deux Mères. P.1

reaches a delicacy not found in many of his poems:

"Et quelqu'un nous a dit que le pli d'une rose
Pouvait meurtrier ton coeur et le faire saigner." 1

Romantic understanding of one soul for another is evident:

"Notre esprit s'épouvante et s'emplit de ténèbres
En sondant de ton coeur le gouffre palpitant,
Et sur tes mazurkas, si fôlâtre pourtant,
Voltige l'écho sourd de tes marches funèbres." 1

This sentiment is also found in his poems to Coppée
and Sully Prudhomme:

"De même des lambeaux de ton chant sympathique
Sur les ailes du vent, à travers l'Atlantique,
Sont venus bien des fois nous griser d'idéal!" 2

"Comme ce voyageur, j'étais tombé brisé;
La soif de l'idéal brûlait mon coeur lassé;
Et rien ne charmait plus mon âme soucieuse;

Mais j'entends du loin votre luth résonner....
Aussitôt à nos chants, source délicieuse,
Mon esprit s'en fuit boire et se rasséréner." 3

Frequently, Chapman alludes to the suffering
he has endured because of jealousy and lack of appreciation. When he compares the poet to a fool, he writes:

"Il le sait, et le barde aisément s'en console,
En songeant qu'à son front doit luire une auréole
Dont nul souffle jaloux ne ternit le rayon,
Que son oeuvre vivra toujours, que le sillon
De l'esprit ne peut être une trace éphémère." 4

In the same vein, and referring perhaps to the criticism
he was obliged to endure, the poet compares the death
of a deer to the killing of poetic aspirations:

"Et c'est souvent ainsi qu'un poète rêveur---

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| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., <u>Les Aspirations</u> , <u>A Chopin</u> | P.127 |
| 2. | Ibid <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable</u> , <u>A François</u>
<u>Coppée</u> | P. 41 |
| 3. | Ibid <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable</u> , <u>A Sully Prud-</u>
<u>homme</u> | P. 43 |
| 4. | Ibid <u>Les Aspirations</u> , <u>Le Fou</u> | P.177 |

--Pendant qu'au lac divin de l'art il boit la vie
Et sent frémir en lui le souffle créateur--
Est épié dans l'ombre et frappé par l'envie." 1

Chapman's work is to a great extent spoiled by two things: his ambition to be recognized by France as a poet and his bitterness in the criticism that his French Canadian compatriots showered upon him. Hence, there appears frequently in his verse, his secret desire and its bitter frustration. To the former, he openly refers as follows:

"Grâce à vous qui m'avez, un jour pris par la main
J'ai gravi les sommets que la gloire environne;
Des rivaux ont jeté des fleurs sur mon chemin,
Le vieux Paris a ceint mon front d'une couronne."2

Ambitious though he was, Chapman did not forget those who helped him attain success and who rendered him service. Here and there throughout his poetry, we find verses like the following:

"Et mon âme a gardé le parfum si suave
Des fruits de l'Amitié savourés sous ton toit." 3

If in journals and newspapers the literary combats of Fréchette vs. Chapman were full of the spirit of 'Deux Copains', in Chapman's several poems, we read only honest appreciation for the man he so openly and bitterly condemned. On Fréchette's return from the United States, Chapman wrote an impromptu verse which

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Aspirations, Dans l'ombre P. 236
2. Ibid Les Rayons du Nord, A Louis Herbette P. 99
3. Ibid Id ' A Edgard T. P. 181

which contains these lines:

"oui, sois le bienvenu, poète à l'âme fière,
Toi dont nous regrettions l'absence volontaire,
Gloire de ton pays que ta muse illustra!
Ta cause est noble et sainte ta mission sacrée
Et dans nos fastes d'or ton nom resplendira!" 1

Later, when comparing Fréchette's birth with that of
Victor Hugo, we read:

"Ah! c'est que dans ton coeur l'ardent patriotisme
En dépit des regrets avait gardé son prisme
C'est que la liberté, qui se meurt de nos jours,
Electrisait encor ta grande âme nâvrée,
C'est que le souvenir, cette lampe sacrée,
Dans ton esprit veillait toujours." 2

Finally, 'Sur la Tombe de Louis Fréchette', the poet
breathes out his regrets, his forgiveness, his desire
for reunion in a peace and understanding that only
heaven can bestow:

"Le destin désunit nos barques fraternelles
Qui la veille sillageient sur le lac de cristal.

Nul ami ne versa plus de larmes amères,
Nul ne fut torturé d'un chagrin plus profond

Comme toi, je voudrais ouvrir enfin mon aile
Je voudrais m'élancer vers l'infini des cieux." 3

The romanticist note of sorrow finds echo
in a few lines of 'Tristesse' and in 'Renouveau':

"Novembre est venu nous glacer--
Et dans mon coeur je sens passer
Le vent d'automne." 4

"Car il me fait songer au printemps de ma vie,
Aux mille illusions dont je me suis bercé,

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| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Québecquoises</u> | P. 59 |
| 2. | Ibid | <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable</u> | P. 58 |
| 3. | Ibid | <u>Les Rayons du Nord</u> | P.161 |
| 4. | Ibid | <u>Les Fleurs de Givre,</u>
<u>Tristesse.</u> | P.157 |

Aux fleurs de mon chemin, à la douce harmonie
Qui charmaient mon oreille aux beaux jours du passé,
Car ce réveil est plein d'une amère ironie
Qui déchire mon cœur par les regrets froissés." 1

but, there follows the hope of the Christian:

"Mais si le renouveau par sa magnificence
Me fait pleurer le temps que chacun pleurera,
Il m'apporte en retour la suprême espérance
Qu'après les jours de deuil, la floraison viendra,
Qu'il brille par delà ce monde de souffrance,
Un printemps éternel où mon cœur renaîtra!" 1

his love for solitude in:

"Et lorsque j'ai longtemps choyé mon plus beau rêve
Quand j'ai gravé des mots au sable de la grève
Quand j'ai d'un oeil ardent, sondé l'immensité
Je reviens au logis où je reprends ma lyre,
Où, l'oreille tendue à la voix qui m'inspire,
Je chante Christ et Liberté." 2

his personal sufferings in:

"Comme l'oiseau blessé, depuis longtemps je souffre.
L'aveugle destinée a plongé dans son gouffre
Et détruit pour toujours mon beau rêve.

Un nuage morose a passé sur ma vie,
Mais, Eudore, crois-moi, vienne ce que j'envie
Renaissent les beaux jours, et je rechanterai" 3

We have from the above ample evidence that the poet revealed his thoughts and emotions, in many of his poems.

From the study of this personal aspect of the work of Chapman, let us pass on to the treatment of morality in his poetry. Although through too frequent use, it becomes monotonous, Chapman's moral principles speak through various agents in his poetry. For instance,

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Feuilles d'Erable, Renouveau P.157
2. Ibid Les québécoises, A mon ami
3. Ibid Id Charles Langelier, P. 94
A mon ami Eudore Evanturel P.180

the lofty and the degrading qualities of man are brought out in poems and addressed to various people and on various occasions. In his poem to Abraham Lincoln, he describes a man of strong character, 'ce prêtre du devoir':

"La nature le fit droit, rugueux et robuste,
Comme le chêne, fier comme l'aigle, clément
Comme l'apôtre, bon comme le bon froment,
Discret et patient comme la destinée
Dont il semblait garder l'empreinte, burénée
Sur sa face tragique." 1

He pays tribute to a man of moral courage and unflinching conviction:

"Diogène cherchait un homme dans la foule.

Et quand dans la cité je rencontre aujourd'hui
Un tribun que la voix du devoir toujours guide,
Dont rien ne fait fléchir la constance intrépide,
Je voudrais que chacun s'inclinât devant lui." 2

to a parliamentarian who has given solace to a people
who looked to him for comfort:

"Rarement nous songeons à ces coeurs indomptés
Que le destin pourtant fait saigner à toute heure,
Combien de châtelains restent sourds aux sanglots
Des pâles suppliants qui frappent à leur porte.

Aux ravages du temps votre nom survivra
Et parce qu'en voulant combattre la souffrance,
Vous payez de votre or la flamme qui luira
Dans l'âtre près duquel gémissait l'indigence,
Au foyer de son coeur plus d'un vous gardera
Le feu cent fois béni de la reconnaissance." 3

to the quiet workman who makes of his hard work a
prayer:

"Il s'imagine voir le blé gonfler sa grange;

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| 1. CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Rayons du Nord, Lincoln</u> | P. 61 |
| 2. Ibid | <u>Les Aspirations, Un homme</u> | P.119 |
| 3. Ibid | <u>Id A M. le Sénateur L. J.</u> | |
| | <u>Forget</u> | P.116 |

Il songe que ses pas sont comptés par un ange,
Et que le laboureur collabore avec Dieu." 1

to a man who has made a right, worthwhile use of money:

"Mais du pur idéal gardant le pur trésor,
Il sent contre le riche à genoux devant l'or
Tressaillir dans son âme une sainte rancune." 2

to the majesty of physical strength in man:

"Mais il est rayonnant, il est superbe à voir,
Lorsque dans la pénombre, à l'approche du soir,
Il fait sous le marteau voler les étincelles." 3

When, on the other hand, Chapman describes
and condemns the traitor and the unprincipled man, his
language is forceful:

"Mais le passé pour toi, vampire, est sans leçons.

Et lorsque l'avenir, voulant d'un criminel
Peindre l'atrocité, l'audace scélérate
Aura nommé Judas, Lincevoire, Erostate,
Il ne t'oubliera point, Victor-Emmanuel!" 4

He uses the same style to show how empty and vain is
ill-gotten success and worldly fame:

"J'aimerais cent fois mieux être ce barde errant,
Que d'avoir incarné le meurtre avec la force,
Que d'avoir triomphé comme l'a fait ce Corse
Qui devait se nommer Napoléon le Grand!" 5

The simple philosophy of the peace and
quiet to be found in the tranquil fulfilment of duty
is given by the plough:

"Je change les déserts en édens fortunés
Je ne suscite pas de guerre ni de grèves;
Avec calme toujours je trace mes sillons,
Dans l'éblouissement des fleurs et des rayons,

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| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm. | <u>Les Aspirations, Le Laboureur</u> | P.271 |
| 2. | Ibid | Id <u>A M. Andrew Carnegie</u> | P.169 |
| 3. | Ibid | Id <u>Le Forgeron</u> | P.272 |
| 4. | Ibid | Id <u>Les Québecquoises,</u>
<u>A. Victor Emmanuel</u> | P.164 |
| 5. | Ibid | Id <u>Les Rayons du Nord,</u>
<u>Aux Invalides</u> | P. 93 |

Dans les tressaillements ineffables des sèves.

Du ciel je sens sur moi la bénédiction.
Je collabore avec le soleil et l'ondée.
Avec la bête, avec la matière et l'idée,
Au poème sans fin de la création." 1

the satisfaction of work well done is told in the description of the two farmers:

"Il s'y repose, en paix, tourné vers l'infini
Contemplant les splendeurs du firmament,
Et remerciant Dieu que sur son champ béni
Laisse tomber sans din le calme et l'abondance,

Loin de toute clameur, l'oeil dans l'éternité,
Eclairé des rayons de la sainte Espérance,
L'humble vieillard rend grâce à la Divinité
Qui versa ses bienfaits sur sa longue existence."2

and the beautiful truth that nothing dies in nature but to live for something better, we read in:

"La goutte d'eau qui monte au ciel du précipice,
Captive du rayon que le soleil y glisse,
Peut redescendre en perle, au milieu de la nuit,
Dans le lis altère qui lui tend son calice.

Mais ils vivent toujours; car les doux trépas
Au soleil éternel ont couvert leur paupière. 3

Then, as if to omit no one from his song of praise, Chapman seeks out the apparently unsuccessful in life, the conquered, the fallen, the oppressed:

"Oui, je dis les douleurs, les deuils et les effrois,
Je chante pour tous ceux dont les mains sont sans tâche
Pour les peuples râlant sous le genou des rois,
Pour Colomb dans les fers, pour Chenier sous la hache
Pour Jeanne à son bucher, pour le Christ sur sa croix." 4

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| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Aspirations, La Charrue</u> | P. 265 |
| 2. | Ibid | <u>Les Fleurs de Givre, Couchant</u> | P. 133 |
| 3. | Ibid | <u>Les Aspirations, La Mort n'existe pas.</u> | P. 291 |
| 4. | Ibid | Id <u>Pro Victis</u> | P. 344 |

The poet's morality is virile, uplifting, ennobling; it offers a challenge to the reader; it promises that the practice of virtue brings happiness.

Like a true poet, more like a true romanticist, Chapman indulges in memoirs and souvenirs. Frequently, this indulgence is voluntary, a compensation for what the poet has lost in life:

"Laissant ployer mon front sous la mélancolie,
Je parcours un par un les feuillets de ma vie,
J'évoque le passé." 1

His souvenirs bring before him unrequited love of which little remains to him:

"Et pour me rappeler de mes heures d'ivresse
Je n'ai conservé rien qu'une soyeuse tresse,
Qu'un doux billet d'amour." 2

The same theme is brought out in 'Souvenir', where he describes in poignant terms, the happiness of two lovers who prayed together in church. In 'Sous les Ormes', the poet describes the joy he experienced in love and the coldness he knew when he was deprived of it:

"Oh! que d'heures étoilées
Elle et moi
Nous avons aux bois coulées
Pleins d'émoi.

Mais ces limpides veillées,
Ces beaux jours,
Se sont enfui par volées,
Pour toujours.

Depuis, une peine amère
Me poursuit
Et je n'aime que ma mère

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Québecquoises, Autrefois P. 119
2. " " " "

Aujourd'hui." 1

As he lives in the past, the poet describes the sons, the stories, the legends he heard, as a child, around the family hearth. As he faces its close, he reflects on the misery of a year that has gone by and the advent of a new one, in 1872:

"Un an vient de s'enfuir: ne le regrettons pas;
Il a semé partout tant de maux sous ses pas,
Que le regretter est folie:
Hélas! durant son cours, qui de nous n'a pleuré?
Qui n'a senti son coeur un instant ulcéré?
Qui n'a parfois maudit la vie?" 2

He summarizes the pleasures, the strength, the renewal that comes with reminiscing on the past when he writes:

"Ainsi que la saison des fleurs et des amours,
Se sont évanouis mes rêves de jeunesse;
Un nuage a passé tout à coup sur mes jours,
Dérobant un soliel qui me versait d'ivresse.

Et puis devant mes yeux rayonne l'avenir:
L'espérance renaît dans mon âme ravie--
Et, le rayon qui brille un instant sur ma vie,
C'est celui que le coeur nomme le souvenir," 3

True Catholic romanticist, a man who has known and suffered from the illusions of love, fame, friendship, Chapman knows the nostalgia of eternity and the consolation to be found in religion. He has written many poems where his religious convictions make themselves felt. For example, in death he wished to hold a book which during life had been dear to him.

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|----|---------------|---|--------|
| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Québécoises, Sous les Ormes</u> | P. 182 |
| 2. | Ibid | Id <u>Le premier de l'an 1872</u> | P. 22 |
| 3. | Ibid | Id <u>Les Aspirations, Les Rayons de Novembre</u> | P. 298 |

How unlike Tennyson, who wished to die with a volume of Shakespeare in his hand, is the Catholic poet who wrote:

"Je voudrais, quand la mort réclamera son bien,
Quand je me sentirai sombrer dans son mystère
Serrer contre mon coeur un humble paroissien
Qu'en mourant me légua ma pauvre vieille mère." 1

The name Madeline brings to mind the Biblical character who so loved the Divine Master. With delicate inspiration and religious appreciation, Chapman draws his parallel:

"Tu ne demandes pas l'or pour cet arôme,
Aucun appât ne peut suffire ton esprit,
Chérissant dans le peuple un autre Jésus-Christ,
De purs enchantements tu lui verses le baume,
Sans jamais espérer en retour de faveurs--
Et ton nom à jamais vivra dans tous les coeurs." 2

His Catholic appreciation of the priesthood, he writes in lines like these:

"En deux sublimes parts votre âme se divise,
L'un appartient au Christ, l'autre à l'humanité." 3

With his esteem of the priesthood comes that of religious life:

"Enfant, as-tu trouvé de l'amertume au fond
Du vase éblouissant qui te versait la vie
Que tu viens d'écarter tout a coup ton beau front
De la foule où naguère on te voyait ravie?

Le souvenir mourra dans ton coeur endormi;
Tu seras pour les tiens, hélas' comme perdue
Tu fermeras tes yeux mourants sans qu'un ami
Puisse mettre un baiser sur ta lèvre éperdue.

Moi, je croirais ton coeur à l'amitié fermé,
Je le croirais plus sourd et plus froid que
la pierre

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1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Aspirations, Le Dernier Livre
 2. Ibid Id A Madeleine P.341
 3. Ibid Les Aspirations Au Curé
Labelle? P.136

Si je ne songeais pas parfois, l'esprit calme,
Qu'il faut, pour toucher Dieu, des anges sur la
terre" 1

Chapman's personal love of Christ is expressed in the
poem which many critics place among his best, 'La
Lampe du Sanctuaire":

"Qui, lampe du saint lieu, de ta flamme touchante,
Le rayonnement seul remplit d'émotion,
Le seul rayonnement me console et m'enchante,
Tandis qu'oubliant Christ, la foule, hélas'. rit,
chante
Continue à bruler en adoration." 2

It is however in his descriptions and meditations on nature that the poet is most frequently uplifting and where his romanticism is most Christian and Catholic. The poems which fall into this category are very numerous. We shall consider but a comparatively small number of them. Often the poet refers to nature in prayer, for example:

"Pas un cri ne rompt le silence
Qui plane sur l'immensité
La tiède nuit de mai s'avance
Avec lenteur sa majesté.

Et pendant que tout se recueille,
Dans la paix tombant de l'éther,
Le petit oiseau sous la feuille,
En gazouillant dit son 'Pater'" 3

"L'étoile dans l'azur clair rallume son feu
Et sur le dais du bois pensif choit la rosée.
.....
Les arbres, inclinés, ont l'air de prier Dieu." 4

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|----|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable,</u> | <u>A Mademoiselle</u> | P.171 |
| 2. | Ibid | Les Quebecquoises, | <u>La Lampe du Sanctuaire</u> | P.214 |
| 3. | Ibid | Les Fleurs de Givre, | <u>L'Heure de la Prière</u> | P.121 |
| 4. | Ibid | Id | <u>A la Brunante</u> | P.119 |

Elsewhere, it is the stream which is slipping through
a rosary!

"En gazouillant parmi les cailloux pailletés
L'eau vous semble égrener un chaplet d'opales." 1

or the moon compared to a sacrament:

"Qui regarde monter, dans le recueillement
La lune, à l'horizon, comme un saint-sacrement." 2

Chapman makes many references to sacrifices in nature:

"Le bosquet semble un reposoir
Et, comme un énorme encensoir,
Le côteau fume." 3

"Ainsi qu'un blanc troupeau qui marche au sac-
rifice,

.....
On voit une vapeur montant du sacrifice
Et cachant dans ses plis l'âme du précipice." 4

"Pour nous faire vivre, il s'immole,
Lui qui touchait le ciel du front,
En mille et mille éclats il vole
Sous la hache du bûcheron." 5

The early awakening of nature is an act of adoration
of God in which the poet joins:

"Tout dans la nature s'anime,
Tout murmure à l'astre du jour
L'hymne d'amour,
Tout proclame le Dieu sublime
Qui tient dans sa puissante main
Le genre humain.

Moi, rêveur perdu sous les cimes
Des bouleaux et des peupliers
Dans les halliers,
J'offre l'hommage de mes rimes
A Celui qui donne l'été,
La liberté! " 6

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|----|---|-------|
| 1. | CHAPMAN, Wm., <u>Les Fleurs de Givre, Dans la Forêt</u> | P.123 |
| 2. | Ibid <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable, l'Aurore Boré-</u>
<u>ale</u> | P.113 |
| 3. | Ibid <u>Les Fleurs de Givre, Au Printemps</u> | P.149 |
| 4. | Ibid <u>Les Aspirations, Le Niagara</u> | P.208 |
| 5. | Ibid <u>Les Feuilles D'Erable, L'Erable</u> | P. 5 |
| 6. | Ibid <u>Les Québecquoises, Le Matin,</u> | P.158 |

Writing about the seasons and the months of the year is a commonplace among the French Canadian poets we are studying. Chapman's 'l'Année Canadienne' is a month by month description of nature and the thoughts that each month awakens in him.

It is in these nature descriptions that the poet reaches the greatest delicacy and picturesqueness of description. The mellow notes required to make the calm, quiet in nature as sensuous realism are brought out in lines like the following:

"Sentant l'ombre venir, le cerf des flots
s'approche;
Et dans les profondeurs au lointain rembruni,
L'on entend par moments les soupirs d'une
cloche." 1

or,

"L'Angelus qui gravit son échelle sonore
Et va se perdre au fond du ciel calme et serein!" 2

The breathing wind is ably pictured in:

"Le vent ne tresse plus, de sa suave haleine,
Les cheveux de l'ormeau." 3

The Montmorency is vividly compared to a boa in its serpentine, to a lion in its fierceness, and its disappearance into the larger river to the forgetfulness into which man often falls:

"Tel le lion captif du montreur, son bourreau,
Dans la cage se tord, mordant chaque barreau,
Et d'instant en instant poussant fou de colère
Un long rugissement qui fait trembler la terre.

.....
l'altier Montmorency dans le cein du grand fleuve,

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. CHAPMAN, Wm., | <u>Les Feuilles d'Erable,</u> | <u>Sur le Lac Saint-</u> | |
| | | <u>Jean</u> | P.181 |
| 2. Ibid | Id | <u>L'Angelus du Soir</u> | P.213 |
| 3. Ibid | <u>Les Quebecquoises,</u> | <u>Nuit de Juin</u> | P.197 |

Dont le rayonnement printanier éblouit,
Silencieusement entre et s'évanouit,
Sous un linceul d'azur que les brises caressent:
Tels ces hommes bruyants et vains qui disparaissent

Dans l'incommensurable océan de l'oubli." 1

The avalanche is portrayed in words and comparisons
that give the required impression of strength:

"Dans les plis sinueux et clairs de chaque pente
Comme un boa d'argent un ruisselet serpente :
Et sur les gorges plane une rose vapeur." 2

All the poet's imaginative powers of description seem
to have been put forth in the following stanzas:

"Tout à coup, vers le Nord, du vaste horizon pur
Une rose lueur émerge dans l'azur,
Et fluide clavier dont les étranges touches
Battent de l'aile ainsi que des oiseaux farouches,
Eparpillant partout des diamants dans l'air,
Elle envahit le vague océan de l'éther.
Aussitôt ce clavier, zèbre d'or et d'agate,
Se change en un rideau dont la blancheur éclate,
Dont les replis moelleux, aussi prompts que
l'éclair

Ondulent sans arrêt sur le firmament clair,
Quel est ce voile étrange ou plutôt ce prodige?

C'est le panorama que l'esprit du vertige
Déroule à l'infini de la mer et des cieux." 3

However, as we have already stated, the repetitious
use of: 'cristal, opal, agate, opalin, limpide, tremolo,
etc! evidently the poet's pet expressions, weakens the
description by their monotony.

Jacques Maritain is credited with having written:

"Les oeuvres les plus universelles et les plus

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Rayons de Nord, Le Montmorency P. 185
2. Ibid Les Fleurs de Givre, L'Avalanche P. 219
3. Ibid Les Feuilles d'Erable, l'Aurore
Boréale P. 113

humaines sont celles qui portent les plus franchement la marque de leur patrie." 1

William Chapman's work must then be considered among those which are the most human. There is nothing, it seems, in the every day life of the average Canadian which has not become for him the title and inspiration of a poem. Every occupation for each season of the year is described in his poems: the trappers, the woodcutters, the lumberjacks, with their booms of logs, the ploughman, the sugar camp, the sower, the blacksmith, the reaper, the hunter and many others live in Chapman's poems, each in his Canadian setting, each with his difficulties and sorrows, each with his work and the fruit of his labour. The poet has written, too, about the different tribes of Indians, their sorrows, their quiet primitive ways of life.

With this study of Canadian nature and Canadian people, Chapman's poetry is full of commiseration for human sufferings of all kinds. The first snowfall fills his own soul with horror, but it also brings to his mind the sufferings of the poor:

"Et, morne et frissonnant, je rêve
Aux misérables en haillons.

.....
J'entends sangloter l'indigence." 2

To make his compassion and charity more practical, he begs for his suffering brethren:

1. BASTIEN, Hermas, Témoignages P. 9
2. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Fleurs de Givre, La Première Neige P.107

"Oh! je vous en conjure, écoutez ma parole!
Réveillez-vous! Donnez aux pauvres votre obole!
Accourez au secours de tant d'infortunés!
Donnez à l'orpheline, à l'infirmes au front blême,
A la veuve, au vieillard, a l'homme méchant même,
A tous les malheureux, donnez! " 1

Sympathetically does he treat the sacrifice of love

which Nobel made to science:

"Moi, je n'épouserai jamais que la Science!

Et si l'humanité, dans son étroite sphère,
Voit se réaliser ce qu'a rêvé Nobel,
L'Eden se rouvrira tout à coup, et le ciel
Dans un baiser sans fin embrassera la terre!" 2

His understanding of human suffering is reflected once
more in these lines:

"Ce noble coeur gémit devant les épreuves:
Il semble avoir pour eux la pitié d'une mère,
Chaque fois que le sort vous tend l'éponge amère,
Il veut prendre une part du fiel que vous buvez."3

The plight of orphaned children struck a sympathetic
chord in the poet's heart:

--- "Non! Non, non!. Tout cela pour moi ne compte guère
Mais que veux-tu de plus pour ta soeur? Dis
-----Sa mère." 4

Even the pity of a dog for human misery was noticed by
the sensitive poet:

"La Pitié, qui devait naître de la Souffrance,
L'avait de loin suivi dans le désert immense.

Et le voyant assis, seul, hagard, aux abois
Dans l'ombre un chien était venu lécher ses
doigts." 5

To one who like Milton understood the words: 'They also

1. CHAPMAN, Wm.,	<u>Les Feuilles d'Erable</u> , <u>Donnez</u>	P.103
2. Ibid	<u>Les Rayons du Nord</u> , <u>Nobel</u>	P. 73
3. Ibid	Id <u>A Hermenegilde Godin</u>	P.139
4. Ibid	Id <u>La Voix du Coeur</u>	P.237
5. Ibid	Id <u>La Pitié</u>	P.241

serve who only stand and wait', Chapman pours out his compassion:

"Or, quand s'évanouit l'éclair de ta prunelle,
La génie en ton âme alluma son flambeau,
Et l'oeil de ta pensée a vu l'astre du Beau,
Ton esprit, pour l'atteindre, a déployé son aile.

Et ce que l'onde dit d'enivrant au roseau,
Ce que le hautbois a de divin dans sa note,
Ce que le vent de mai sous les lilas chuchote,
Oui, tout cela frémit dans ton gosier d'oiseau."¹

These are but a few of the many examples of Christian charity and sympathy for the physical and moral sufferings of humanity that are found in Chapman's works.

In his treatment of death, the poet resembles Cremazie in his realism and Le May in his delicate touch, but his development of the subject does not reach the extent of the former and his fear and hatred of all that death brings makes his references to it less sublime than that of the latter. About the month of November, he writes:

"Une souffle sépulcral passe sur les vallons." ²
and farther in the same poem:

"C'est le mois des douleurs, des regrets, des adieux
Les coeurs sentent le froid des marbres mortuaires;
Et des foules en deuil, des larmes dans les yeux,
Vont s'incliner les croix des cimetières." ³

The glory of All Saints' Day loses for the poet its brightness in the tolling of churchbells:

"Et parmi tous les bruits rauques de la tourmente

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Feuilles d'Erable, A Eugénie Tessier P. 121
2,3, Ibid Les Fleurs de Givre, Novembre. P. 67

Qu'il soulève les flots et fait craquer les toits,
Toujours plus tristement la cloche se lamente." 1

Like Crémazie, Chapman was inspired with patriotic zeal towards Canada and towards France. True patriot, Chapman sings of many deeds of Canadian valour and bravery. For example in 'Les Invincibles', he regrets the fact that this bravery is not appreciated by the Mother Country:

"Nos pères, oubliés par la cour de Versailles
Bien qu'ils eussent gagné la dernière bataille,
Avaient cédé Québec aux Anglais triomphants." 2

To bring out still more the courage of the French Canadian soldier, he composes the touching episode of the Rebellion of 1837, 1838, in which a young boy could not be paid to reveal information to Colborne and make so brave an answer:

"A cette offre, l'enfant eut un sursaut de rage,
Et, sécouant son front cravaché par l'outrage,
Tourné, les poings crispés, du côté des soldats,
Tragique, répondit---
---C'était bon pour Judas!" 3

However, in his patriotic zeal, Chapman seems to have most at heart, the union of the two races living in Canada: the blood of both flowed in his veins. He uses many occasions in which to bring out this idea. It prevails in his poem 'Victus sed Victor' and again in 'Les Deux Drapeaux'. The greatest compliment which he feels he can pay to Sir Francis Parkman is:

1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Fleurs de Givre, La Toussaint P.129
2. Ibid Les Feuilles d'Erable, Les Invincibles P.19
3. Ibid Les Aspirations, Le Petit Patriote P.280

"Mais de tous les pays que votre plume vante
Celui qui gardera plus fraîche et plus vivante
Votre mémoire, c'est le Canada français." 1

And in his poem to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, he brings out
the fact that Laurier in his political life and Chapman
himself in his poetry are both in positions to build up
such 'entente cordiale':

"Plus d'un barde voulut sur sa lyre féconde
Célébrer l'union des deux guides du monde,
Mais nul sous le drapeau de la noble Albion
N'a d'un coeur plus fervent béni cette union
Que vous, l'altier tribun, et moi, l'humble poète." 2

Chapman takes pride in two things: in his French des-
cent and in the appreciation that French Canadians have
for France. The first of these is brought out in:

"La France ne meurt pas, et quand elle se couche,
Son front garde toujours sa majesté farouche,
Et son vainqueur épie en tremblant son sommeil.

Que dis-je encor? Si Dieu voulait que cette Gaule,
Dont nul fardeau n'a su courber la large épaule,
Expirant sous les coups d'un brutal conquérant,
On la verrait, après trois jours, briser sa tombe
Et venir, en planant comme aiglon ou colombe,
Reprendre sa carrière aux bords du Saint-Laurent." 3

The second is evident in 'Aux Bretons':

"Et tout fier comme vous de votre fier succès,
Répétant un grand cri qui vibre au Nouveau-Monde,
Je vous jette à travers la grande mer qui gronde
Le bravo délirant du Canada Français." 4

Both these sentiments are compressed into the lines:

" Les vainqueurs
Eurent notre serment, mais la France eut nos coeurs,

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1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Feuilles d'Erable, A Francis Parkman P.131
 2. Ibid Les Rayons du Nord, A Sir W. Laurier P. 13
 3. Ibid Les Aspirations, France P.110
 4. Ibid Les Rayons du Nord, Aux Bretons P. 19

Et desormais l'enfant est digne de la mère." 1

There is perhaps in his poetry dealing with France an exaggerated desire to please which gives his work a note that is lacking in sincerity and is somewhat filled with cringing; these two defects take away from his attempts at sublime song in praise of France.

In his volumes of poetry, there are numerous narratives, which although strictly speaking may not be classed as romantic, have nevertheless, all the characteristics of romanticism. Chapman's subjects are those which evoke sympathy and sorrow; he uses a high moral theme always; for instance the struggle between virtue and life as shown in 'Sacrilege'; the environment is Canadian, such as 'Cadieux' about whom he writes in romantic strain:

"Seraient-ce des sanglots de manes des sauvages
Que Cadieux, pour sauver des amis, pourchassait?
Ou bien cieux du héros souffrant sur ces riv-
ages
De notre oubli? Personne au monde ne le sait" 2

or Indian, as in the case of 'Owantha', the rejected Indian wife, or 'Le Huron', which full as it is with romanticist sadness, love, hate, revenge, recalls the works of Chateaubriand; the poet's reflections and conclusions are of a romanticist nature.

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1. CHAPMAN, Wm., Les Aspirations, Le Mère et l'enfant P.38
2. Ibid Les Feuilles d'Erable, Cadieux. P.83

Even though it has been impossible to make a detailed study of such voluminous poetry as is that of Chapman, suffice it to say, from what has already been done, that Chapman has a place among the romanticists of early Quebec; like them he bears all the ear-marks of a Catholic romantic poet and like them, his poetry is 'la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur.'

CHAPTER VI

ALFRED MORISSET

"Et chaque âme a son deuil, et
tout coeur sa souffrance!
Le bonheur né d'hier n'a pas de
lendemain;
L'homme seul porte au front le
rayon d'espérance
Qui marque son chemin."

Chapter VI Alfred Morisset.

"Et chaque âme a son deuil, et tout coeur sa souffrance!
Le bonheur né d'hier n'a pas de lendemain;
L'homme seul porte au front le rayon d'espérance
 Qui marque son chemin."

Unlike the poets already introduced into this study, Dr. Morisset knew nothing of the glory of a poet-laureate, nothing of the bitterness of rivalry and jealousy in an art. He did know human suffering, physical and moral, he knew and loved nature-- these he sang in the quiet of his country home, in the loneliness of a heart whose gaping wounds were kept open by sensitive vivid remembrances. His modest volume of poetry was published posthumously. "Ce qu'il a chante" was never written for ovation; it was the songs of his heart composed as they welled up in his poetic imagination and became the written account of his intimate thoughts.

A college companion of Louis Fréchette, Dr. Morisset was interested in literature, but because he conscientiously devoted himself to his profession, writing was for him a relaxation, an outlet for pent-up emotions, not a means of livelihood. His poetry is spontaneous, simple, direct; it appeals, it en-

nobles, it reveals a noble soul.

The cross weighed heavily on the shoulders of this man who lived but fifty-three years, therefore it is not surprising to find throughout his poetry the 'vanity of vanities' as sung by the psalmist. He learned early in life 'Le bonheur né d'hier n'a pas de lendemain.' Because with his heart he sang of his sufferings, of his confidence in God, of his resignation, of the emptiness of this mortal life, of God's beauty and strength, in nature, well might he be classed among our French Canadian romanticist poets. His work, although not as extensive as that of Fréchette, Le May or Chapman, has the characteristics which place him with them.

With the possible exception of the narrative poems: 'Le temps aux fraises', 'Avant et apres le traitement', 'Le frêne des Ursulines', 'Le rétardataire', 'La bible de la mère Redmond', 'La jambe de liège', 'La peche aux eperlons', 'Les deux tombes', all his poems are romantic, both according to the subjects treated and the form. Mgr. C. Roy has well categorized Dr. Morisset's style:

"La poésie la plus vraie n'est pas celle que l'on fabrique avec des mots sonores, ambitieux, rares, dé concertants; celle-là peut être splendide en son opulence parnassienne, et elle peut s'élever bien haut, soutenue par les grands coups d'ailes du génie; mais combien sont-ils les poètes qui peuvent oser ces grandes chevauchées lyriques? Et combien de postiches n'a pas occasionnés la production de cette école, et combien de poètes qui

ont rimé avec effort des vers riches et inutiles?

Combien je préfère la poésie sincère, jaillissante, modeste, qui coule de source fraîche et limpide, emportant parfois quelques cailloux en son flot léger, mais qui vous donne toujours l'impression de la vie! Le docteur Morisset n'eut pas l'ambition d'être un poète; mais il voulut chanter les harmonies de ses paysages de Sainte-Hénédine, quelquefois sans assez d'éclat, souvent avec une simplicité charmante. Et pour cela, il mérite qu'on le lise." 1

With greater criticism, yet sincere appreciation,

l'Abbe Dandurand writes of the same poet:

"Mais ces éclats de rire gaulois et francs sont rares dans le livre de Morisset. Plus souvent il exprime des pensées religieuses. Les plus belles sont les conseils de résignation et d'espérance chrétiennes que donne aux malheureux cet homme, si éprouvé dans son être physique, ses affections conjugales et paternelles; conseils dictés par une foi forte et un coeur ému..... La régularité absolue des alexandrins et la robustesse de la versification ainsi que la couleur de certains termes apparentent ces vers à ceux de Malherbe." 2

Dr. Morisset's poems are not ornate descriptions--they are heart-to-heart talks with nature. It is not surprising to find, that although he addresses nature during all seasons of the year, his preference seems to be with autumn, the sadder season. "A mon petit ruisseau" and "Sous mes sapins" are delightfully intimate. His soul vibrates in unison with the tones sung by each of the seasons. Nature speaks, smiles, sings, sends

1. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Érables en Fleurs, P. 99
2. DANDURAND, l'Abbe Albert, La poésie Canadienne-Française, P. 61,62

forth a sweet perfume of prayer in spring:

"Tout parle à notre coeur" 3

....."la nature embelie
Sourit à nos douleurs." 4

"Le rossignol plaintif déroule dans les cimes
Des chants mélodieux qui nous font palpiter." 5

....."L'arome résineux
Qui s'exhale des pins et du grevier
Monte comme un encens vers la voute des cieux
Et nous dit de prier." 6

The quiet and peace of summer the poet sings in "A mon
petit ruisseau":

"Tu nargues les années
Et leur sombre chagrin
En poursuivant serein
Tes calmes destinées." 7

In autumn, the poet finds that everything that charmed
him in spring no longer has any hold:

"Tout pleure.....

"Les ciseaux ont quitté nos forêts solitaires

"Tout dort

"Tout ce décor de deuil et de mystère sombre
Nous remémore ceux que nous avons aimés." 8

Yet in autumn, the poet finds other pleasures: rest,
calm, silence, peace:

"Je viens me reposer un instant sur tes mousses,

Et retremper mon âme aux émotions douces
De ton calme béni." 1

".....pour toi les antans ont de douces
caresses" 1

"Que ton silence est grand! que ta paix est
profonde
O bois! Tu dors bien loin de ce
fracas du monde
Qui tue avant le temps." 1

Winter awakens virility, strength, generosity in the
poet's soul and body:

"Le chêne ce géant à la forte membrure
Balance ses grands bras en cadence et mesure,
Tel un gladiateur romain;
Il attend, torse nu, les vents et la tempête." 2

"Le givre étale ses splendeurs,
La perle et le rubis, la saphir et l'opale
S'unissent pour lancer, dans la lumière pâle,
Le chatoiment de leurs couleurs.

Le fer du bûcheron s'abat avec mesure,
Sur l'érable aux fibres d'acier;

L'adroit pic-vert pattu de son long bec avide
Frappe à coups redoublés l'écorce sèche et vide,
Où se cache un ver somnolent." 2

"La perdrix de savane, le gentil écureuil, les ours en-
gourdis, le fier orignal, le renard glapissant, le lièvre
soupconneux....." all are necessary to fill up this
picture of strength and majesty---all are hidden joys
for those who live effeminate, luxurious lives, "Frileu-
sement cachés sous vos chaudes flanelles", but they are
invigorating realities for those who live in the virile
spirit of nature.

Dr. Morisset's psychology of life is uplifting,

1. MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, Ce qu'il a chanté, Bois d'au-
tomne, P. 91
2. Ibid, La Forêt, l'hiver, P. 95

his morality, high. In "La richesse ici-bas", he outlays a whole plan for happiness wherein wealth is not the essential, contradicting thereby the worldlings who seek their entire happiness in the pleasures which money alone can buy and are, as a result, disillusioned. Happiness, according to the poet, is found in mental activity, in acts of worth, in the dreams of childhood, in the symphonies sung in a triumphant heart, in the contentment of later years, in the reward of work well done, in the perfect understanding of a happy married life, in parental love of children, in the clean, good reputation which a father can will to his son, in the assurance of an honest conscience, in the love of one's country, in faith in Christ, in the love of suffering and the cross:

"C'est l'abnégation, c'est l'oubli de soi-même,
C'est l'amour de la Croix, le consolant emblème
Des vrais enfants du Christ." 1

In the same method of enumeration and delicately written verse, Morisset shows the beautiful paths that lead to God; it is the Star leading the mariners, the full flood of a rose-tinted dawn, the fresh flush joys of spring, the dying notes of October,

"Et ces chants de départ font éclore en notre
être
Un besoin de pleurer qui nous ramène à Dieu." 2

the silver stream left by the moon in water,

1. MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, Ce qu'il a chanté, P. 37
2. Ibid Id P.123

"C'est l'espoir qui manque aux ailes de ses rêves:
La soif de l'infini la menera vers Dieu." 1

the sanctity of the home,

"Divinise l'amour et nous ramène à Dieu". 1

and finally sorrow,

".....la sombre Douleur,
Cette vierge au front blême,
Ne la maudissons pas, sa mission est sainte:
Elle fait espérer pour nous conduire à Dieu." 1

In thinking about the death of children, the poet reviews the sordid side of life which has been spared these little ones, who know so easily and so early the happiness of a better world. For these infants,

"A la coupe des jours trempant leurs lèvres roses
Ils n'ont bu que le miel." 2

there is no fear of shipwreck, no deceits to learn in life, no disillusion in the phantoms of pleasures, no funerals leading them to the graves of their loved ones:

"Et sur un être cher dromant au cimetière
Leurs yeux n'ont pas pleuré." 2

These are but a few examples of the impressive philosophy of Dr. Morisset's noble life. With the true uplift of poetic inspiration, he lived his days according to the splendid pattern he so deftly describes in his poetry.

Morisset's true patriotism shows itself in an ardent zeal to keep Canadians in their native land, the

1. MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, Ce qu'il a Chanté, P. 123
2. Ibid Id P. 139

land he loves and described so well. There may be reasons for Irish and French immigrants seeking a better life in the new world, but those alleged by Canadians have no foundation. After beautifully describing the seasons in Canada, the poet exclaims:

"Et pourtant, vous quittez ces édens qu'on
admire,
Pour courir la fortune et pour servir de mire
A l'étranger qui donne un peu d'or pour du
sang." l

For young girls, loss of virtue and faith are exchanged for 'la toilette de demain'. To young men is given, in exchange for the independence of the labourer, base servitude. Then, as a last encouragement the poet begs:

"Dépensez au pays la moitié des fatigues
Dont vous êtes ailleurs trop follement
prodigues,
Et le pain du bon Dieu ne vous manquera pas.

.....
Fils de colons, restez aux champs!" l

In this poem and in "Le frêne des Ursulines", there lies a deep love of Canada; the lines are sincere, quiet, convincing. They lack, perhaps the energetic challenge of Fréchette's patriotic works and certainly the exclamatory oratory of Chapman, but they reveal a true Canadian patriotic heart. There is conviction, persuasion, reverent love in the lines:

"Toi, poète qui bois aux coupes des génies,
Et prépares, rêveur, les grandes symphonies
Des lointains avenirs,

Tu devrais dans tes vers le chanter, ce vieux
frêne;
Et ne pas oublier cet anneau dans la chaîne
De nos grands souvenirs. " 1

"Quel spectacle touchant! Et quelle belle image
Du bonheur d'autrefois au foyer paternel!
Oh! mais.....pensons-y bien, il ne faut
qu'un orage
Pour changer tout ce ciel." 2

The storm that broke into the happy Morisset household and robbed it of a young wife and mother was destined to ravage the heart of the poet and to cause him to write his most lyrically sad poems. When he writes of death, Dr. Morisset lets his broken heart speak; his poems are personal, because his experience is so realistic. His description of his young wife's death and his own grief are vividly portrayed in "Plus de Mère." The future held little brightness for him:

"Car le chemin est long et la terre est déserte
Quand il faut marcher seul vers le sombre avenir;
Et porter au dedans une blessure ouverte
Qui saigne au fond du souvenir!" 3

But the true Christian consoles himself and his children:

"Quand vient le soir, allez pleurer au cimetière;
Elle est là qui repose, un ange à son côté.
Parlez bas! elle dort, votre pieuse mère,
Heureuse, et pour l'éternité!" 3

The cemetery becomes from that time, a place of refuge for the poet; and it is from one of his visits there that resulted perhaps the most exquisitely con-

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| 1. MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, <u>Ce qu'il a chanté,</u> | P. 23 |
| 2. Ibid | Id P.111 |
| 3. Ibid | Id P.111 |

ceived and written poem, "Les deux pensées". It is full of poignant sweetness and delicacy, lyrical beauty and consoling truth:

".....c'étaient deux petites pensées
Ecloses sans orgueil sous le souffle de Dieu
Comme des âmes soeurs se tenant enlacées
Dans un baiser d'adieu.

Ce spectacle nouveau consola mes alarmes;
Je voyais en ces fleurs mes deux êtres chéris;
Ce sont leurs coeurs, me dis-je, évoqués par mes
larmes
Qui sont là reflouris." 1

As the poet writes about the ease with which the dead are forgotten, he knows that all do not forget so easily. The last stanza of 'L'Oubli' reveals the open wound of his heart:

"Non! sur terre il n'est pas que des âmes inertes,
Qui perdent en un jour la mémoire des leurs:
Et si le triste Oubli rend les tombes désertes,
Bien sur, le Souvenir y fait croître des fleurs." 2

However, in another of his poems treating of the same subject, Dr. Morisset almost reaches the realism of Cremazie as he describes "Les Morts":

"Est-ce vrai que parfois, lorsque le jour expire,
Vous franchissez le seuil de votre noir empire
Pour aller rafraichir vos crânes nus aux vents?" 3

He concludes the poem with the stark realism from which there is escape for no one:

"N'allons pas oublier que nous sommes poussière,
Et qu'un jour reprenant leur essence première,
Nos os seront pulvérisés." 3

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| 1. | MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, <u>Ce qu'il a chanté,</u> | P. 119 |
| 2. | Ibid | Id P. 131 |
| 3. | Ibid | Id P. 149 |

Because so much of his life and thoughts were spent with her who had already taken flight into another better world, Dr. Morisset wrote in souvenirs like a true romanticist. For his own consolation and to keep his children, as it were, conscious of their loss, the poet dips into the past, indulges in remembrances and finds happiness in writing some truly romantic poetry. As he writes to his sister, "Souvenirs du Passé", his heart finds its way to the grave again:

"Trois de ceux-là déjà, dormant au cimetière,
A l'ombre des cyprès aux ramures de deuil;
Ils sont là pour toujours! " 1

He strikes a gayer note in "Les Temps des fraises", a poem which sweetly and naturally describes a group of happy brothers and sisters tenderly loved by their mother:

"Oh! que sa joie était profonde,
Quand ses lèvres faisaient la ronde,
Et se posaient sur notre front! " 2

The souvenir of a young love taken from the poet's life by death caused him, in the full vigor of youth to write forcibly:

"Et je devrai, mon Dieu, survivre sans me plaindre
Au cuop qui m'est porté;
Et sentir chaque jour ce souvenir m'étreindre
Dans sa brutalité." 3

In "Les vers luisants", the poet abandons himself com-

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| 1. | <u>MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, Ce qu'il a chanté.</u> | P. 1 |
| 2. | Ibid | P. 7 |
| 3. | Ibid | P.33 |

pletely to souvenirs and meditation on the brevity of earthly happiness:

"Souvenirs trois fois chers! vous n'êtes pas
défunts
Vous revenez toujours, ô chatoyantes flammes,
De vos blanches clartés illuminer nos âmes;
Et vous voulez revivre et vous électriser,
Quand les souffles du coeur viennent vous at-
tiser." 1

"----Des souffles violents hélas! les ont éteints,
Comme on fait des flambeaux, après les grands
festins " 1

All the love of a brother for a younger sister, all the happiness of a carefree youth, all the heartache that follows sorrows are finely interwoven into "Heures du Soleil":

"Qu'elles sont déjà loin ces heures embaumées,
Souvenirs d'un matin, beaux projets d'avenir!
Il ne nous reste plus de ces choses aimées
Qu'un lointain souvenir." 2

In the poem "Rêverie",

"Laisant aller mon rêve aux flots qui l'ont bercé,
.....
.....à travers le prisme des années."3

the poet reviews scenes that have brought him happiness,

.....ces panoramas, ces scènes du jeune âge,
Ces rayons printaniers, ces tableaux séduisants." 3

and he admits in the enraptured hours of souvenirs, he relives happiness,

"Elle est sombre, souvent, la route poursuivie,
Et trop nombreux les maux qu'on ne peut en bannir,
Mais, pour les coeurs brisés, fatigués de la vie,
N'est-ce pas vivre encor que de se souvenir?" 3

1.	MORISSET, Dr. Alfred,	<u>Ce qu'il a chanté,</u>	P.45
2.	Ibid	Id	P.77
3.	Ibid	Id	P.115

To the poet, even death cannot deprive the living of mental intercourse with dear departed ones because of the God-given faculty, memory. Because of this picture-gallery, there are many things that one never forgets and in the remembering, the Catholic romanticist finds a re-living of earth's friendships and love:

"C'est en vain que la Mort, de son baiser suprême,
Vient cueillir parmi nous les êtres que l'on aime;
Elle n'est pas vainqueur!
En brisant le pétale, elle laisse l'arôme;
Et c'est ce doux parfum qui guérit comme un baume
Les blessures du coeur.

Si tu crois à l'amour, Jeanne, je t'en supplie,
Ne dis plus, par pitié! qu'ici-bas, tout s'oublie;
Qu'un jour vient tout finir!
Car si tout passe du coeur qui survit à la tombe,
Il est un bruit du coeur qui survit à la tombe:
Celui du souvenir." 1

In recalling the day of his childhood, the love of his mother, the happiness of home-life, the devotedness of his young wife, Dr. Morisset has revealed himself in a more personal manner than have the other poets of this school. Death has come into his life frequently; it has made deep rents; his memory keeps these dear ones ever before him and as a result, his poetry is filled with the sighs of a sad man. With his faith as a bulwark, he lives in the hope of a better life and an eternity of unbroken bliss.

1. MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, Ce qu'il a chanté, P. 155

"La foi du poète et sa pitié apparaissent d'ailleurs souvent dans les pièces du recueil. Et non seulement, il y montre sa fidélité chrétienne, mais il invite les hommes à se retourner vers Dieu et il proclame que la poésie elle-même doit avoir pour mission de porter les âmes vers Lui." 1

From his own experience, he is able to console the discouraged, the poor, the disillusioned young girl, those deprived of dear ones in death, those seeking the realization of lofty ideals here on earth--all of whom he remembers in 'Les Fronts Penchés'.

At all times, the poet has made nature the confidant of his sufferings; perhaps in none of his poems has he done it more deftly than in 'Voix du Coeur', one of the most lyrical, most personal, most touching of his poems.

The warm voices of spring, the quiet sounds of summer, the plaintive sighs of autumn and the freezing chills of winter reverberate in the heart of the poet and produce one of his most beautiful and most characteristically romantic poems:

"Parfums des lointaines années,
Mousses de mes sentiers fleuris,
Brises, suaves halénées,
Arômes de mes bois chéris!
Germes féconds, que le ciel fit éclore
En ces chastes instants!
Là, dans mon coeur, vous embaumez encore,
Senteurs de mon printemps!

Oiseaux qui chantiez au bocage
Vos gais refrains et vos amours!

Doux bruits de nids, muet langage!
Jadis je vous cherchais toujours.
Nous nous aimions et je vous parlais d'ELLE
Dans notre intimité.
Là, dans mon coeur, chantent, écho fidèle,
Ces voix de mon été." 1

Except for the hope that underlies it, his poem 'Rêve
Triste' is Lamartinian in sighs, longings, description
and beauty:

"Et là, tout à ma peine, et le coeur plein de toi,
Abimé dans mon rêve et loin des bruits du monde,
Je songe aux jours que Dieu, dans sa bonté féconde,
Nous versa pleins d'amour, d'espérance et de foi.

Le naufrage m'attend; car, ballotté sans trêve,
Mon esquif s'en ira rouler au fond des mers,
Et moi, triste débris, battu des flots amers,
Les vents me jetteront sur l'éternelle grève." 2

And when the poet has sung his best, when his
heart has given all, comes his swan-song, touching in
its simplicity, its sincerity, its sorrow and its hope:

"Je ne chanterai plus; car ma course est finie:
Bientôt j'irai m'asseoir au séjour des élus....
Mais, pour monter vers Dieu qui me donne la vie,
Oh! laissez-moi prier! Je ne chanterai plus!" 3

Mgr. Camille Roy, after having read "Ce qu'il
a chanté", wrote:

"Je ne puis mettre au bout de ma plume que ces
mots 'tendresse exquise, sensibilité cordiale'
qui paraissent le mieux résumer mes impressions." 4

Dr. Morisset sought no approbation, no reward
from posterity; he freely gave this 'tendresse exquise'

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| 1. | MORISSET, Dr. Alfred, <u>Ce qu'il a chanté,</u> | P.89 |
| 2. | Ibid | Id |
| 3. | Ibid | Id |
| 4. | ROY, Mgr. Camille, <u>Erables en Fleurs,</u> | P.99 |

from the abundance of his generous heart and went
quietly into the eternity he so desired, to meet her,

"Qui du haut du ciel bleu nous regarde et
nous aime...

Son image est dans l'air! " 1

CHAPTER . VII

STROPHES AND MODELS AS USED BY CREMAZIE,
FRECHETTE, LE MAY, CHAPMAN, MORISSET.

"Le lyrisme du coeur vaut encore celui
des règles."

Chapter VII Strophes and Models as
used by Cremazie, Fréchette, Le May,
Chapman, Morisset.

"Le lyrisme du coeur vaut encore celui des règles."

A work of this length does not permit a detailed study, such as has already been made by many French and French Canadian critics, of the influence of the French romanticists on our poets of the School of Quebec and of the type of stanza and laws of versification which governed their works. However, a true romanticist must be one both in matter and form. The preceding chapters of this work dealt with matter; this one shall be consecrated to form.

It seems rather contradictory that art, talent, genius, spontaneity, inventiveness, creative works should be bound by laws, should be subjected to close scrutiny, should be analyzed acutely for defects, flaws, deviations from standard. Yet, it seems, that in all fields of art, but more especially in that of poetry, are the laws more binding and the criticism colder. Since it is necessary then, that poetic works be found to abide by rules, regulating form before they may be classified, our study must encase each of our poets into the mold and make sure they fit before they

'be dubbed 'romanticists'.

With the overthrow of classicism and the advent of romanticism there grew into the field of Literature the earmarks destined to distinguish the romantic poet. In French literature, the credit for inventing and using these splendidly goes to Victor Hugo. As Charles ab der Halden says:

"Victor Hugo est le père de tous ceux qui écrivent en vers français." 1

With Hugo, are Lamartine, Gautier and Sully Prudhomme. Our study then revolves itself about the way in which these men influenced our poets and the perfection or imperfection with which these Quebec poets use the rules of romanticist versification.

Professor Marion's study of the strophes of Crémazie, as found in Chapter 5 of his work, 'Les Lettres Canadienne d'Autrefois, Tome 5', give the type of stanza structure, of lines, of feet as used by the French Romanticist School. We shall base our work on his discovery and on the splendid 'exposé' he gives of it.

After studying the works of Crémazie's successors, Doctor Marion arrives at the happy conclusion that he was the first French Canadian poet to use the stanza-forms of the Romanticists. One of the forms

1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la littérature Canadienne française, p. 250

he uses most frequently is the six-line-stanza with a perfect aab, ccd, rhyme as found in Lamartine, Musset and Hugo; this type of stanza is one of the most essentially lyrical.

He uses two other forms which were favorites of Hugo: the six-line stanza of twelve isometric feet and a six-line stanza of five twelve-foot lines and a sixth of eight feet. Like Hugo, too, he often varied this form and used the alternative 12, 12, 6, 12, 12,6 -- a form popular with Hugo, Lamartine and Gautier. By showing a marked preference for the longer verse, he brought upon himself the criticism of using too majestic a form for an idea that should have been treated more lightly, more intimately.

Charles ab der Halden has the following remarks to make about the French influence suffered by Crémazie:

"Dans le poète des Mille Iles, nous retrouvons à la fois un classique du 18 ième siècle finissant et un disciple gauche et timide du romantisme à ses debuts.....
"Le début des Mille Iles, avec son intrépide banalité:
'Si j'étais la douce hirondelle
Qui vole en chantant dans les airs,'
rappelle le mouvement d'une Orientale:
'Si j'étais la feuille qui roule
L'aile tournoyante des vents....'
Tout le monde connaît la chanson pseudo-barbaresque des Orientales:
'Dans la galère capitaine
Nous étions quatre-vingts rameurs.'
Que l'on y compare le Chant des voyageurs de

Crémazie:

'Dans la forêt et sur le cage,
Nous étions trente voyageurs.'

Crémazie, quelque peu modifié le rythme. Le double quatrain de Hugo s'est allongé en une strophe de dix vers, dont les six derniers riment en 'age' et en 'eurs'. Cependant malgré l'incontestable supériorité de Hugo, dont les rimes en 'tone' bien appuyées par la consonne sont pleines d'imprévu, nous préférons ici le poète canadien, moins artificiel. Avec un refrain emprunté à une fantaisie de jongleur qui amuse, il a fait quelque chose de naturel et de charmant." 1

Doctor Marion, however, disclaims such close affinity between Crémazie's poem and that of Hugo. He also attributes scenic blindness to Crémazie in his description of Canadian nature, whereas many critics find another Chateaubriand or a Salvator Rosa in Crémazie. In spite of the controversy, Crémazie remains our first romanticist poet, in matter and in form.

It would appear that Fréchette was much better versed in the rules of romanticist versification than was his predecessor in this field. Indeed, l'abbé A. B. Routhier writes of his 'Loisirs',

"la forme emporte le fond." 2

Charles ab der Halden gives Fréchette credit for literary artistic ability:

"Il sait que les mots ont une valeur indépendante de leur signification, et il parvint souvent à de fort heureuses sonorités.....Il ne faut donc s'étonner de trouver dans M. Fréchette des

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1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la Litterature Canadienne française, p.241
 2. ROUTHIER, l'abbe A. B., Causerie du Dimanche, p.231

des rimes purement pour l'oreille; s'il agit ainsi encore une fois, c'est de propos délibéré, en artiste sur de sa valeur et qui domine sa matière loin d'être dominé par elle." 1

According to Lareau, Fréchette lacked the sincerity and depth of feeling of Crémazie, even though his poetry may have been more perfect:

"Moins profond que Crémazie, il est plus souple et plus varié." 2

Bisson makes the following claims on Fréchette's imitation of the French romanticists:

" 'Epaves poétiques'---quantité de pièces en alexandrins, strophes lyriques de Hugo; Musset--quatrains isométriques d'alexandrins et d'octosyllabes; quatrains hétérométriques de 3 alexandrins suivis d'un vers octosyllabique. Hugo--le sixain: strophe de cinq vers (4 alexandrins et 1 vers octosyllabique) 'Les Oiseaux de Neige'--forme de sonnet influencé des Parnassiens. 'La Légende d'un Peuple'--l'épopée de Hugo....Malheureusement, quand les béquilles romantiques ne sont plus là pour le soutenir, ses vers deviennent froids et prosaïques ou emphatiques et pompeux." 3

It is unanimously agreed that Fréchette used to a greater extent and with more variance than Crémazie, the poetic methods of the French romanticists:

1. The alexandrine with its solemnity, broken however by rhythmic accents and fixed or mobile caesura;
2. The flowing, richly cadenced trimeter so neglected by Crémazie;
3. The hiatus, disregarded by his master;
4. Antithesis and enumeration.

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1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Etudes de la Littérature Canadienne française, p.125
 2. LAREAU, Edmond Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne, p. 125
 3. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme au Canada français, Chapter 9, p.187

Although in the work of Fréchette, there still linger traces of classicist influence, it is that of romanticism which predominates. A literary critic summarizes this study of form whereby one poet's writing is closely compared with another's:

"Nous ne reprocherons donc pas au poète canadien d'avoir cherché dans des Contemplations ou la Légende des Siècles des rythmes et des coupes de vers. Nous ne nous amuserons pas non plus à éplucher des hémistiches pour y découvrir que Fréchette employa le même adverbe ou la même conjonction que Hugo à la même place. Ces petites puérilités de certains critiques canadiens nous font sourire. Mais nous découvrirons une ressemblance plus intime dans l'emploi des mêmes procédés généraux, l'antithèse quelquefois, plus souvent l'énumération." 1

Le May offers for the first time in the history of French Canadian poetry the most originality. In vain do critics try to find the models from whom he copied, upon whose form he relied. Bisson is baffled:

"Dans les meilleurs de ces sonnets (Les Gouttelettes) Le May est vraiment original.....Nous relevons uniquement les sonnets dans lesquels se trouvent des influences romantiques: Booz (Hugo-- Booz endormi), La Cloche (retour aux thèmes de Lamartine), Ma Mère (Milly de Lamartine et Van Brisé de S. Prudhomme). Mais il ne s'agit plus d'un simple imitation; les vers de Le May sont sincères et vécus." 2

The poetry of Le May comes from the heart, the subjects he chooses are within his grasp; the form required is one of simplicity--it needs none of the com-

1. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Études de la Littérature Canadienne française, p. 241
2. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme au Canada français, p. 220

plications that make up stilted poetry. His sincerity, spontaneity and naturalness give him his originality. When he disregards these and tries to use what is not natural with him as he does in 'Tankourou', the results are confusing; he is lost in the use of the alexandrine in this poem. He, however, uses it more successfully in his poem dealing with Canadian exploits of valour as in 'In Concordia Salus' and other poems of 'Reflets d'Antan'.

If Crémazie can be classed with the romanticists by the use of a specially lyrical type of poem-structure, then Le May may easily make the same claim, for the six-line strophe of 12 feet with the aab, ccb rhyme is found in many of his poems, in his different collections. In this same type of sonnet, he uses a rhyme-form not so usual as the above: abb, acc. He uses with great frequency the four-line stanza alexandrine with either the abba, or abab rhyme scheme. The trimeter also is used, when the subject treated requires a lighter, easier form. In poems of a narrative type, like 'Colborne', there is no definite stanza pattern and a sort of successive rhyme--aa, bb, cc, etc. In 'Les Epis', the 12-foot line is most prevalent.

It is in writing about the flow, the sincerity and the vibrant note of Le May's poetry that Mgr. C. Roy

decides that 'le lyrisme du coeur vaut encore celui des règles.' Critics are unanimous in attributing to Le May more perfection, precision, more care and inventive ability than to the other early poets. Bisson writes of "Glané dans notre histoire":

"C'est par cette concision, par cette façon de trouver le mot juste que se fait voir la supériorité de Le May sur ses prédécesseurs et ses contemporains. Son vers aussi est plus net, plus ciselé, plus léger et porte la trace de moins d'effort; il a un vocabulaire plus étendu; ses images et ses métaphores sont à la fois plus simples et plus naturelles." 1

".....deux manières et deux inspirations parallèles mais totalement différentes, l'épique et la lyrique.....la manière lyrique est incomparablement supérieure à la manière épique." 1

At a later date, with more literary experience than his predecessors, perhaps it is because more is expected of him that Chapman is so severely criticized for his negligences of poetic form. Charles ab der Halden is merciless:

"Il n'a pas craint de travailler d'effacer de certaines pièces les vers les plus malencontreux, de remettre sur le métier son ouvrage, et de couper des strophes entières.

.....Nous retrouvons la lourdeur des trois verbes successifs qui semblent la tournure favorite de notre auteur.

.....Dans son oeuvre, nous trouvons donc, comme défaut principal, l'impropriété, qui rend certaines phrases à peu près inintelligibles... un crime de lèse-poésie, la platitude." 2

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1. BISSON, Laurence, Le Romantisme Littéraire au Canada Français P. 222
P. 224
 2. AB DER HALDEN, Charles, Nouvelles Etudes de Littérature Canadienne-française, P. 260

Arnould while admitting Chapman's ability in using the rhyming alexandrine, credits him with using Classicist ways and thereby losing the coherence typical of the romanticist school.

"Il sait faire sonner le vers alexandrin et y laisser déborder les nobles sentiments ou de grandioses horizons, surtout ceux de la mer qu'il a excellé à peindre et avec des procédés tout classiques, sans la moindre incohérence romantique." 1

In even a cursory study of Chapman's works, the poverty of his rhyme schemes, the prosy heaviness of his verse, the lack of flow and of vocabulary, the repetition of the same rhyme and the same kind of strophe, the absence of rhythm and the substitution of an oratory which is almost prose, are all too evident and inspire the reader with the futile wish that Chapman had written less, with more care.

The pomp and solemnity of the alexandrine appeal to Chapman; he uses this line more than any other in his several collections of poems. The almost continual use of this line with weak rhyme makes his poetry monotonous and leaves little of harmony for a sensitive ear to enjoy. Besides the frequency of the same endings, we find such weak rhymes as 'ant' with 'anc', 'lequel and 'le ciel' and in almost every strophe, the rhyming of words, changed only by the addition of the

1. ARNOULD, Louis, Nos Amis les Canadiens, P. 162

prefix, for example: perdu, éperdu; ravi, vie; éclair, clair. Then to enhance this monotony, Chapman has a series of pet words upon the use of which he is convinced the beauty of his poetry depends: "agate, lyre, azure, grève, sanglots, opal, écarlate, cristal."

Did space and time permit, it would be interesting to list the number of times the poet uses such expressions as the above and others.

Like Crémazie, Fréchette and Le May, Chapman made use of the type of strophe characteristic of the romanticists and hence conforms thereby with their regulations and school. As we have said, the alexandrine is the verse which predominates in his works, whether it be a six-line strophe of sonnet-rhyme aab, ccb, or longer stanzas such as he uses in his more narrative type of verse with an aabdd, etc. rhyme; or a four-line stanza with alternate or consecutive lines rhyming. Other types of strophes are common enough: four-lines of 8 feet with alternate lines rhyming, three-line-stanzas of 12 feet with a combination rhyme for two stanzas aab, ccb for the second, and the six-line strophes, the first 5 verses of which are 12-foot lines and the last of 8 feet, following the aab, ccb, rhyme. The use of all of these forms, peculiar to Hugo, Lamartine and Gautier and to our other early Quebec romantic

poets gives Chapman another reason for being placed with them.

"La poésie la plus vraie n'est pas celle que l'on fabrique avec des mots sonores, ambitieux, rares, déconcertants; celle-là peut-être splendide en son opulence parnassienne et elle peut s'élever bien haut soutenue par les grands coups d'aile du génie; mais combien sont-ils les poètes qui peuvent oser ces grandes chevauchées lyriques." 1

Certainly Chapman could not and Morisset needed not. The style of his stanzas is not complicated, but on the other hand, even in its simplicity, it offers more variety, more flow, more poetic enjoyment than does that of Chapman. Unlike the poets we have already studied the alexandrine does not predominate in 'Ce qu'il a chanté'. A few poems, for example, 'Je ne chanterai plus' are of four regular alexandrine lines, with alternate lines rhyming; others of six lines follow the patterns used by the poets we have already studied, 12, 12, 6, 12, 12, 6 with aab, ccb rhyme as found in 'Tout ne s'oublie pas'. The six-foot line is prevalent and usually found in a four-line stanza with the last line of three or four feet. There are several examples of three-line-stanzas of eight feet in the work of Morisset. He has, voluntarily or involuntarily-- and it would seem more like the latter,--because his

1. ROY, Mgr. Camille, Erables en Fleurs, P. 110

work is so spontaneous, so free from stilted study--
made use of the caesura with its accompanying rhythm
and emphasis. Morisset, too, used the romanticist
forms of poetry.

"Ce qui manque à nos oeuvres les plus connues,
c'est l'originalité dans la forme et dans le
fond.

.....Nos devanciers, consacrés poètes par
leurs contemporains, furent des imitateurs,
trop longtemps attachés aux lois tradition-
nelles de la prosodie française et d'une
familiarité compromettante avec les auteurs
d'outre-mer." 1

Be that as it may, in their originality
or their lack of it, our early French Canadian poets
of the Quebec school used the same forms of poetry as
did the French romanticists.

1. CHARBONNEAU, Jean, Des Influences Françaises
au Canada, Tome I, P. 50

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

"Le romantisme eut à vrai-dire sa source la plus jaillissante dans ce besoin du divin qui tourmente le coeur de l'homme."

Chapter VIII Conclusion.

"Le romantisme eut à vrai-dire sa source la plus jaillissante dans ce besoin du divin qui tourmente le coeur de l'homme."

Although the little library in old Quebec of 1860 offered nothing of the grandeur of the French salon of the same period, although the honest, young literary-minded men who gathered there had more honesty, ambition, sincerity and religion than their compatriots across the sea, still it is out of such humble beginnings, such unpretentious gatherings that French-Canadian literature sprang. Had Crémazie, from his deathbed at Le Havre seen a vision of the outcome of his efforts towards the building up of a French-Canadian poetry, he would have died happy in his exile. Had Abbé Holmes lived to see the far-reaching effects of his teaching of romanticism, he too, would have found that the struggle against innovations was not in vain. For despite their willingness or unwillingness to admit the fact, it still remains evident that Crémazie influenced his contemporaries and followers to a great extent and since he himself showed so marked a preference for the romantic school of French literature, so did all the poets who make up

the nucleus of French-Canadian literature, the School of Quebec of 1860.

Crémazie, by nature, by choice, because of his early education, because of his expressed preference, because of the subjects he chose, even though his poems are comparatively speaking few, was at heart, a romanticist. Nay, even more, Dr. Marion makes him the precursor of romanticism in French-Canada.

Louis Fréchette, more virile, more vehement, possessed of more scientific knowledge, follows easily in Crémazie's footsteps. So much does he desire to live as a romanticist that he finds an exile for himself where like Hugo, he can raise the cry of an abandoned romanticist. Later, more mellowed and a better poet than politician, he writes on all subjects dear to the romantic school.

From the parliamentary library at Quebec and more especially from the countryside of beloved Lotbinière, the delicate nature-poems of Pamphile le May came into the literary field to charm their readers, to uplift, to give French-Canada more romanticist culture.

William Chapman's many volumes speak the ambitions of a poetry-lover, of an ardent though careless poet, but of a romanticist scholar also. In comparison with his abundance, or shall we call it super-

abundance, the modest volume of the country doctor who lived close to human suffering and to nature, is more uplifting, more touching, freer from ambition and hence more simple and sincere.

At the end of this work, several conclusive ideas are forced upon us:

1. All these poets were truly romanticists, both because of the forms which they used and because of the subjects treated;
2. All were men of such self-control and well-placed pride that they did not make of their own misery a subject for verse and entertainment of others;
3. All were Catholic in their romanticism; hence their poetry is full of Christian hope, Catholic subjects, noble love;
4. All were superior to the European masters who influenced them because of their faith;
5. To a great extent, few of their works, except those of Le May and Morisset, lack originality and show mother-country influence.

"Christianisme, catholicisme, patriotisme, mélancolie, saine et justifiée: telles sont les caractéristiques essentielles du romantisme de Crémazie." 1

1. MARION, S. Les Lettres Canadiennes d'Autrefois,
Tome 5, P. 92

These, with fidelity to use the forms adapted by the romantic poets, were also the characteristics of the other poets of the same school--men who felt the need of the divine tormenting their hearts and who sought solace in lines of poetic beauty.

"Le romantisme est surtout la nostalgie de Dieu sensible au coeur."