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**7 BEST SHORT STORIES
CANADA**

EDITED BY AUGUST NEMO

TACET BOOKS

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Introduction

Canadian literature has been created in Canadian English, Canadian French, and Canadian Gaelic, and more recently by First Nations and immigrants of other ancestral backgrounds. Influences on Canadian writers are broad, both geographically and historically, representing Canada's diversity in culture and region.

While mostly written in English, "Indigenous literature" has begun to flourish and is based upon many distinct oral traditions, languages, and cultural practices. However, Canadians have been less willing to acknowledge the diverse languages of Canada, such as Canadian Gaelic.

The dominant European cultures were originally English, French, and Gaelic. However, in recent decades Canada's literature has been strongly influenced by immigrants from other countries. Since the 1980s Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity has been openly reflected in its literature, with many of its most prominent writers focusing on ethnic minority identity, duality and cultural differences.

The Intellectual Development of the Canadian People

by John George Bourinot^[1]

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EFFECT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES ON MENTAL DEVELOPMENT.

Should the title of this review come by any chance under the notice of some of those learned gentlemen who are delving among Greek roots or working out abstruse mathematical problems in the great academic seats on the banks of the Cam or Isis, they would probably wonder what can be said on the subject of the intellectual development of a people engaged in the absorbing practical work of a Colonial dependency. To such eminent scholars Canada is probably only remarkable as a country where even yet there is, apparently, so little sound scholarship that vacancies in classical and mathematical chairs have to be frequently filled by gentlemen who have distinguished themselves in the Universities of the parent state. Indeed, if we are to judge from articles and books that appear from time to time in England with reference to this country, Englishmen in general know very little of the progress that has been made in culture since Canada has become the most important dependency of Great Britain, by virtue of her material progress within half a century. Even the Americans who live alongside of us, and would be naturally supposed to be pretty well informed as to the progress of the Dominion to their north, appear for the most part ignorant of the facts of its development in this particular. It was but the other day that a writer of some ability, in an organ of religious opinion, referred to the French Canadians as a people speaking only inferior French, and entirely wanting in intellectual vigour. Nor is this fact surprising when we consider that there are even some Canadians who do not appear to have that knowledge which they ought to have on such a subject, and take many opportunities of concealing their ignorance by depreciating the intellectual efforts of their countrymen. If so much ignorance or indifference prevails with respect to the progress of Canada in this respect, it must be admitted

—however little flattering the admission may be to our national pride—that it is, after all, only the natural sequel of colonial obscurity. It is still a current belief abroad—at least in Europe—that we are all so much occupied with the care of our material interests, that we are so deeply absorbed by the grosser conditions of existence in a new country, that we have little opportunity or leisure to cultivate those things which give refinement and tone to social life. Many persons lose sight of the fact that Canada, young though she is compared with the countries of the Old World, has passed beyond the state of mere colonial pupilage. One very important section of her population has a history contemporaneous with the history of the New England States, whose literature is read wherever the English tongue is spoken. The British population have a history which goes back over a century, and it is the record of an industrious, enterprising people who have made great political and social progress. Indeed it may be said that the political and material progress that these two sections of the Canadian people have conjointly made is of itself an evidence of their mental capacity. But whilst reams are written on the industrial progress of the Dominion with the praiseworthy object of bringing additional capital and people into the country, only an incidental allusion is made now and then to the illustrations of mental activity which are found in its schools, in its press, and even in its literature. It is now the purpose of the present writer to show that, in the essential elements of intellectual development, Canada is making not a rapid but certainly at least a steady and encouraging progress, which proves that her people have not lost, in consequence of the decided disadvantages of their colonial situation, any of the characteristics of the races to whom they owe their origin. He will endeavour to treat the subject in the spirit of an impartial critic, and confine himself as closely as possible to such facts as illustrate the character of the progress, and give much encouragement for the

future of a country even now only a little beyond the infancy of its material as well as intellectual development.

It is necessary to consider first the conditions under which the Dominion has been peopled, before proceeding to follow the progress of intellectual culture. So far, the history of Canada may be divided into three memorable periods of political and social development. The first period lasted during the years of French dominion; the second, from the Conquest to the Union of 1840, during which the provinces were working out representative institutions; the third, from 1840 to 1867, during which interval the country enjoyed responsible government, and entered on a career of material progress only exceeded by that of the great nation on its borders. Since 1867, Canada has commenced a new period in her political development, the full results of which are yet a problem, but which the writer believes, in common with all hopeful Canadians, will tend eventually to enlarge her political condition, and place her in a higher position among communities. It is only necessary, however, to refer particularly to the three first periods in this introductory chapter, which is merely intended to show as concisely as possible those successive changes in the social and political circumstances of the provinces, which have necessarily had the effect of stimulating the intellectual development of the people.

Religion and commerce, poverty and misfortune, loyalty and devotion to the British Empire, have brought into the Dominion of Canada the people who, within a comparatively short period of time, have won from the wilderness a country whose present condition is the best evidence of their industrial activity. Religion was a very potent influence in the settlement of New France. It gave to the country—to the Indian as well as to the Frenchman—the services of a zealous, devoted band of missionaries who, with unflinching

courage, forced their way into the then trackless West, and associated their names to all time with the rivers, lakes, and forests of that vast region, which is now the most productive granary of the world. In the wake of these priestly pioneers followed the trader and adventurer to assist in solving the secrets of unknown rivers and illimitable forests. From the hardy peasantry of Normandy and Brittany came reinforcements to settle the lands on the banks of the St Lawrence and its tributary rivers, and lay the foundations of the present Province of Quebec. The life of the population, that, in the course of time, filled up certain districts of the province, was one of constant restlessness and uncertainty which prevented them ever attaining a permanent prosperity. When the French regime disappeared with the fall of Quebec and Montreal, it can hardly be said there existed a Canadian people distinguished for material or intellectual activity. At no time under the government of France had the voice of the 'habitants' any influence in the councils of their country. A bureaucracy, acting directly under the orders of the King of France, managed public affairs; and the French Canadian of those times, very unlike his rival in New England, was a mere automaton, without any political significance whatever. The communities of people that were settled on the St. Lawrence and in Acadia were sunk in an intellectual lethargy—the natural consequence not only of their hard struggle for existence, but equally of their inability to take a part in the government of the country. It was impossible that a people who had no inducement to study public affairs—who could not even hold a town or parish meeting for the establishment of a public schools—should give many signs of mental vigour. Consequently, at the time of the Conquest, the people of the Canadian settlements seemed to have no aspirations for the future, no interest in the prosperity or welfare of each other, no real bonds of unity. The very flag

which floated above them was an ever-present evidence of their national humiliation.

So the first period of Canadian history went down amid the deepest gloom, and many years passed away before the country saw the gleam of a brighter day. On one side of the English Channel, the King of France soon forgot his mortification at the loss of an unprofitable 'region of frost and snow;' on the other side, the English Government looked with indifference, now that the victory was won, on the acquisition of an alien people who were likely to be a source of trouble and expense. Then occurred the War of American Independence, which aroused the English Ministry from their indifference and forced into the country many thousands of resolute, intelligent men, who gave up everything in their devotion to one absorbing principle of loyalty. The history of these men is still to be written as respects their real influence on the political and social life of the Canadian Provinces. A very superficial review, however, of the characteristics of these pioneers will show that they were men of strong opinions and great force of character—valuable qualities in the formation of a new community. If, in their Toryism, they and their descendants were slow to change their opinions and to yield to the force of those progressive ideas necessary to the political and mental development of a new country, yet, perhaps, these were not dangerous characteristics at a time when republicanism had not a few adherents among those who saw the greater progress and prosperity of the people to the south of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. These men were not ordinary immigrants, drawn from the ignorant, poverty-stricken classes of an Old World; they were men of a time which had produced Otis, Franklin, Adams, Hancock and Washington—men of remarkable energy and intellectual power. Not a few of these men formed in the Canadian colony little centres from which radiated more or less of

intellectual light to brighten the prevailing darkness of those rough times of Canadian settlement. The exertions of these men, combined with the industry of others brought into the country by the hope of making homes and fortunes in the New World, opened up, in the course of years, the fertile lands of the West. Then two provinces were formed in the East and West, divided by the Ottawa River, and representative government was conceded to each. The struggles of the majority to enlarge their political liberties and break the trammels of a selfish bureaucracy illustrate the new mental vigour that was infused into the French Canadian race by the concession of the parliamentary system of 1792. The descendants of the people who had no share whatever in the government under French rule had at last an admirable opportunity of proving their capacity for administering their own affairs, and the verdict of the present is, that, on the whole, whatever mistakes were committed by their too ardent and impulsive leaders, they showed their full appreciation of the rights that were justly theirs as the people of a free colonial community. Their minds expanded with their new political existence, and a new people were born on the banks of the St. Lawrence.

At the same time the English-speaking communities of Upper Canada and the Maritime Provinces advanced in mental vigour with the progress of the struggle for more liberal institutions. Men of no ordinary intellectual power were created by that political agitation which forced the most indifferent from that, mental apathy, natural perhaps to a new country, where a struggle for mere existence demands such unflagging physical exertion. It is, however, in the new era that followed the Union that we find the fullest evidence of the decided mental progress of the Canadian communities. From that date the Canadian Provinces entered on a new period of industrial and mental activity. Old jealousies and rivalries between the different

races of the country became more or less softened by the closer intercourse, social and political, that the Union brought about. During the fierce political conflicts that lasted for so many years in Lower Canada—those years of trial for all true Canadians—the division between the two races was not a mere line, but apparently a deep gulf, almost impossible to be bridged in the then temper of the contending parties. No common education served to remove and soften the differences of origin and language. The associations of youth, the sports of childhood, the studies by which the character of manhood is modified, were totally distinct. With the Union of 1840, unpalatable as it was to many French Canadians who believed that the measure was intended to destroy their political autonomy, came a spirit of conciliation which tended to modify, in the course of no long time, the animosities of the past, and awaken a belief in the good will and patriotism of the two races, then working side by side in a common country, and having the same destiny in the future. And with the improvement of facilities for trade and intercourse, all sections were brought into those more intimate relations which naturally give an impulse not only to internal commerce but to the intellectual faculties of a people. During the first years of the settlement of Canada there was a vast amount of ignorance throughout the rural districts, especially in the western Province. Travellers who visited the country and had abundant opportunities of ascertaining its social condition, dwelt pointedly on the moral and intellectual apathy that prevailed outside a few places like York or other centres of intelligence; but they forgot to make allowance for the difficulties that surrounded these settlers. The isolation of their lives had naturally the effect of making even the better class narrow-minded, selfish, and at last careless of anything like refinement. Men who lived for years without the means of frequent communication with their fellow-men, without opportunities for social, instructive intercourse, except what they might

enjoy at rare intervals through the visit of some intelligent clergyman or tourist, might well have little ambition except to satisfy the grosser wants of their nature. The post office, the school, and the church were only to be found, in the majority of cases, at a great distance from their homes. Their children, as likely as not, grew up in ignorance, even where educational facilities were at hand; for in those days the parent had absolute need of his son's assistance in the avocations of pioneer life. Yet, with all these disadvantages, these men displayed a spirit of manly independence and fortitude which was in some measure a test of their capacity for better things. They helped to make the country what it is, and to prepare the way for the larger population which came into it under more favourable auspices after the Union of 1840. From that time Canada received a decided impulse in everything that tends to make a country happy and prosperous. Cities, towns and villages sprang up with remarkable activity all over the face of the country, and vastly enlarged the opportunities for that social intercourse which is always an important factor in the education of a new country. At the same time, with the progress of the country in population and wealth, there grew up a spirit of self-reliance which of itself attested the mental vigour of the people. Whilst England was still for many 'the old home,' rich in memories of the past, Canada began to be a real entity, as it were, a something to be loved, and to be proud of. The only reminiscences that very many had of the countries of their origin were reminiscences of poverty and wretchedness, and this class valued above all old national associations the comfort and independence, if not wealth, they had been able to win in their Canadian home. The Frenchman, Scotchman, Irishman, and Englishman, now that they had achieved a marked success in their pioneer work, determined that their children should not be behind those of New England, and set to work to build up a system of education far more comprehensive and liberal than that

enjoyed by the masses in Great Britain. On all sides at last there were many evidences of the progress of culture, stimulated by the more generally diffused prosperity. It was only necessary to enter into the homes of the people, not in the cities and important centres of industry and education, but in the rural districts, to see the effects of the industrial and mental development within the period that elapsed from the Union of 1840 to the Confederation of 1867. Where a humble log cabin once rose among the black pine stumps, a comfortable and in many cases expensive mansion, of wood or more durable material, had become the home of the Canadian farmer, who, probably, in his early life, had been but a poor peasant in the mother country. He himself, whose life had been one of unremitting toil and endeavour, showed no culture, but his children reaped the full benefits of the splendid opportunities of acquiring knowledge afforded by the country which owed its prosperity to their father and men like him. The homes of such men, in the most favoured districts, were no longer the abodes of rude industry, but illustrative, in not a few cases, of that comfort and refinement which must be the natural sequence of the general distribution of wealth, the improvement of internal intercourse, and the growth of education.

When France no longer owned a foot of land in British North America, except two or three barren islets on the coast of Newfoundland, the total population of the provinces known now as Canada was not above seventy thousand souls, nearly all French. From that time to 1840, the population of the different provinces made but a slow increase, owing to the ignorance that prevailed as to Canada, the indifference of English statesmen in respect to colonization, internal dissensions in the country itself, and its slow progress, as compared with the great republic on its borders. Yet, despite these obstacles to advancement, by 1841 the population of Canada reached nearly a million and a half, of whom at

least fifty-five per cent. were French Canadians. Then the tide of immigration set in this direction, until at last the total population of Canada rose, in 1867, to between three and four millions, or an increase of more than a hundred per cent. in a quarter of a century. By the last Census of 1870, we have some idea of the national character of this population—more than eighty per cent. being Canadian by birth, and, consequently, identified in all senses of the term with the soil and prosperity of the country. Whilst the large proportion of the people are necessarily engaged in those industrial pursuits which are the basis of a country's material prosperity, the statistics show the rapid growth of the classes who live by mental labour, and who are naturally the leaders in matters of culture. The total number of the professional class in all the provinces was some 40,000, of whom 4,436 were clergymen, 109 judges, 264 professors, 3,000 advocates and notaries, 2,792 physicians and surgeons, 13,400 teachers, 451 civil engineers, 232 architects; and for the first time we find mention of a special class of artists and *litterateurs*, 590 in all, and these evidently do not include journalists, who would, if enumerated, largely swell the number.

Previous to 1867, different communities of people existed throughout British North America, but they had no general interest or purpose, no real bond of union, except their common allegiance to one Sovereign. The Confederation of the Provinces was intended, by its very essence and operation, to stimulate, not only the industrial energy, but the mental activity as well, of the different communities that compose the Dominion. A wider field of thought has, undoubtedly, been opened up to these communities, so long dwarfed by that narrow provincialism which every now and then crops up to mar our national development and impede intellectual progress. Already the people of the Confederated Provinces are every where abroad recognised

as Canadians—as a Canadian people, with a history of their own, with certain achievements to prove their industrial activity. Climatic influences, all history proves, have much to do with the progress of a people. It is an admitted fact that the highest grade of intellect has always been developed, sooner or later, in those countries which have no great diversities of climate. If our natural conditions are favourable to our mental growth, so, too, it may be urged that the difference of races which exists in Canada may have a useful influence upon the moral as well as the intellectual nature of the people as a whole. In all the measures calculated to develop the industrial resources and stimulate the intellectual life of the Dominion, the names of French Canadians appear along with those of British origin. The French Canadian is animated by a deep veneration for the past history of his native country, and by a very decided determination to preserve his language and institutions intact; and consequently there exists in the Province of Quebec a national French Canadian sentiment, which has produced no mean intellectual fruits. We know that all the grand efforts in the attainment of civilization have been accomplished by a combination of different peoples. The union of the races in Canada must have its effect in the way of varying and reproducing, and probably invigorating also, many of the qualities belonging to each—material, moral, and mental; an effect only perceptible after the lapse of very many years, but which is, nevertheless, being steadily accomplished all the while with the progress of social, political, and commercial intercourse. The greater impulsiveness and vivacity of the French Canadian can brighten up, so to say, the stolidity and ruggedness of the Saxon. The strong common-sense and energy of the Englishman can combine advantageously with the nervous, impetuous activity of the Gaul. Nor should it be forgotten that the French Canadian is not a descendant of the natives of the fickle, sunny South, but that his forefathers came

from the more rugged Normandy and Brittany, whose people have much that is akin with the people of the British islands.

In the subsequent portions of this review, the writer will endeavour to follow the progress in culture, not merely of the British-speaking people, but of the two races now working together harmoniously as Canadians. It will not be necessary to dwell at any length on the first period of Canadian history. It is quite obvious that in the first centuries of colonial history, but few intellectual fruits can be brought to maturity. In the infancy of a colony or dependency like Canada, whilst men are struggling with the forest and sea for a livelihood, the mass of the people can only find mental food in the utterances of the pulpit, the legislature, and the press. This preliminary chapter would be incomplete were we to forget to bear testimony to the fidelity with which the early Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries laboured at the great task devolving upon them among the pioneers in the Canadian wilderness. In those times of rude struggle with the difficulties of a colonial life, the religious teachers always threw a gleam of light amid the mental darkness that necessarily prevailed among the toilers of the land and sea. Bishops Laval, Lartigue, Strachan, and Mountain; Sister Bourgeois, Dr. Burns, Dr. Jas. McGregor, Dr. Anson Green, are conspicuous names among the many religious teachers who did good service in the early times of colonial development. During the first periods of Canadian history, the priest or clergyman was, as often as not, a guide in things temporal as well as spiritual. Dr. Strachan was not simply the instructor in knowledge of many of the Upper Canadian youth who, in after times, were among the foremost men of their day, but was as potent and obstinate in the Council as he was vigorous and decided in the pulpit. When communications were wretched, and churches were the exception, the clergyman was a constant guest in the

humble homes of the settlers, who welcomed him as one who not only gave them religious instruction, but on many a winter or autumn evening charmed the listeners in front of the blazing maple logs with anecdotes of the great world of which they too rarely heard. In those early days, the Church of England clergyman was a man generally trained in one of the Universities of the parent state, bringing to the discharge of his duties a conscientious conviction of his great responsibilities, possessing at the same time varied knowledge, and necessarily exercising through his profession and acquirements no inconsiderable influence, not only in a religious but in an intellectual sense as well—an influence which he has never ceased to exercise in this country. It is true as the country became more thickly settled and the people began to claim larger political rights, the influence of many leading minds among the Anglican clergy, who believed in an intimate connection between Church and State, even in a colony, was somewhat antagonistic to the promotion of popular education and the extension of popular government. The Church was too often the Church of the aristocratic and wealthier classes; some of its clergy were sadly wanting in missionary efforts; its magnificent liturgy was too cold and intellectual, perhaps, for the mass: and consequently, in the course of time, the Methodists made rapid progress in Upper Canada. Large numbers of Scotch Presbyterians also settled in the provinces, and exercised a powerful influence on the social, moral and political progress of the country. These pioneers came from a country where parish schools existed long before popular education was dreamed of across the border. Their clergy came from colleges whose course of study cultivated minds of rare analytical and argumentative power. The sermon in the Presbyterian Church is the test of the intellectual calibre of the preacher, whose efforts are followed by his long-headed congregation in a spirit of the keenest criticism, ever ready to detect a want of logic. It is

obvious then that the Presbyterian clergyman, from the earliest time he appeared in the history of this country, has always been a considerable force in the mental development of a large section of the people, which has given us, as it will be seen hereafter, many eminent statesmen, journalists, and *litterateurs*.

From the time the people began to have a voice in public affairs, the politician and the journalist commenced naturally to have much influence on the minds of the masses. The labours of the journalist, in connection with the mental development of the country, will be treated at some length in a subsequent part of the review. At present it is sufficient to say that of the different influences that have operated on the minds of the people generally, none has been more important than the Press, notwithstanding the many discouraging circumstances under which it long laboured, in a thinly populated and poor country. The influence of political discussion on the intellect of Canada has been, on the whole, in the direction of expanding the public intelligence, although at times an extreme spirit of partisanship has had the effect of evoking much prejudice and ill-feeling, not calculated to develop the higher attributes of our nature. But whatever may have been the injurious effects of extreme partisanship, the people as a rule have found in the discussion of public matters an excitement which has prevented them from falling into that mental torpor so likely to arise amid the isolation and rude conditions of early times. If the New England States have always been foremost in intellectual movement, it may be attributed in a great measure to the fact that from the first days of their settlement they thought and acted for themselves in all matters of local interest. It was only late in the day when Canadians had an opportunity given them of stimulating their mental faculties by public discussion, but when they were enabled to act for themselves they rapidly

improved in mental strength. It is very interesting to Canadians of the present generation to go back to those years when the first Legislatures were opened in the old Bishop's Palace, on the heights of Quebec, and in the more humble structure on the banks of the Niagara River, and study the record of their initiation into parliamentary procedure. It is a noteworthy fact that the French Canadian Legislatures showed from the first an earnest desire to follow, as closely as their circumstances would permit, those admirable rules and principles of procedure which the experience of centuries in England has shown to be necessary to the preservation of decorum, to freedom of speech, and to the protection of the minority. The speeches of the leading men in the two Houses were characterized by evidences of large constitutional knowledge, remarkable for men who had no practical training in parliamentary life. Of course there were in these small Assemblies many men rough in speech and manner, with hardly any education whatever but the writers who refer to them in no very complimentary terms always ignore the hardships of their pioneer life, and forget to do justice to their possession, at all events, of good common-sense and much natural acuteness, which enabled them to be of use in their humble way, under the guidance of the few who were in those days the leaders of public opinion. These leaders were generally men drawn from the Bar, who naturally turned to the legislative arena to satisfy their ambition and to cultivate on a larger scale those powers of persuasion and argument in which their professional training naturally made them adepts. With many of these men legislative success was only considered a means of more rapidly attaining the highest honours of their profession, and consequently they were not always the most disinterested guides in the political controversies of the day; but, nevertheless, it must be admitted that, on the whole, the Bar of Canada, then as now, gave the country not a few men who forgot mere