

ANTOINE GERIN-LAJOIE AND PIERRE-JOSEPH-OLIVIER CHAUVEAU:
A STUDY IN IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN THE POLITICAL AND
LITERARY WRITINGS OF TWO NINETEENTH CENTURY FRENCH-
CANADIAN AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 1837 insurrections broke out in the two provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. In Upper Canada the protest was against a conservative oligarchy that controlled government too exclusively for the tastes of those who believed in the right to supremacy within government of the elected House of Assembly. In Lower Canada an apparently similar situation existed. There, the legislative assembly, constantly controverted by a powerful executive had brought government virtually to a standstill by refusing to vote subsidies. Colonial office attempts to override the assembly led to an abortive armed protest. The Imperial government suspended the constitution that governed Lower Canada. An interim government--known as the Special Council and composed largely of English Canadians--was set up, while a commission under Lord Durham¹ investigated the causes of the disorder in the two provinces.

The document that resulted from this investigation, Lord Durham's Report², was instrumental in bringing about the Act of Union. The two provinces were united by this Act under a single government from 1841 until Confederation in 1867.

Durham's analysis of the trouble in Lower Canada pointed up the ways in which it differed from the disputes in Upper Canada and from

¹Durham, John George Lambton, first Earl of (1792-1840). Governor-in-Chief of British North America and Lord High Commissioner in 1838.

²The first official publication of Durham's Report was in the Parliamentary Papers for 1839 (the "blue books"). The full text of the report was also published in London, Toronto, and Montreal in 1839.

democratic movements in general:

I looked on it as a dispute analogous to those with which history and experience have made us so familiar in Europe,-- a dispute between a people demanding an extension of popular privileges, on the one hand, and an executive, on the other, defending the powers which it conceived necessary for the maintenance of order. I supposed that my principal business would be that of determining how far each party might be in the right, or which was in the wrong; of devising some means of removing the defects which had occasioned the collision; and of restoring such a balance of the constitutional powers as might secure the free and peaceful working of the machine of government.

.
I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle not of principles, but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions, until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada in the hostile divisions of French and English.³

He goes on to suggest that the nature of the quarrel which pitted the legislative against the executive had been for this very reason

deceptive:

Thus the French have been viewed as a democratic party, contending for reform; and the English as a conservative minority, protecting the menaced connection with the British Crown, and the supreme authority of the Empire. There is truth in this notion, in so far as respects the means by which each party sought to carry its own view of Government into effect But when we look to the objects of each party, the analogy to our own politics seems to be lost, if not actually reversed; the French appear to have used their democratic arms for conservative purposes rather than those of liberal and enlightened movement⁴

Durham's Report plainly recommended a policy of assimilation. The Union of the provinces would eventually drown the French in an

³The Report of the Earl of Durham (London: Methuen, 1902), pp. 7,8,9.

⁴Ibid., p. 12.

English majority as the population of the upper province with the influx of English speaking immigrants, gradually overtook that of the lower. Assimilation of the French to an English world seemed to him the obvious way to eliminate political disputes based on racial and cultural differences between the two nations.

Acceptance of the Union was pushed through the Special Council in Lower Canada without difficulty. Protests against the legality of an Act, imposed upon a people by an interim government of this kind, were only the beginning of a general outcry. The French Canadians were understandably incensed by the Durham Report and by the intentions of the Act of Union. However, it would appear that Durham had touched on an essential problem. After the Union, the liberal-conservative contradictions that he had noted continued to haunt their most legitimate grievances. This thesis will attempt to examine these contradictory attitudes as they appear in the political and imaginative literature of the period.

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie and Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau grew to manhood in the stormy years of the rebellion, the Union, and its aftermath. They were both deeply involved in the political and cultural life of French Canada. Chauveau as a journalist and a poet commented politically on the events between 1840 and 1850. Gérin-Lajoie wrote a history of the political events of the same period. Each man wrote a single novel. Both novels were "romans à thèse" whose didactic intention was a solution of the socio-political problems of the French-Canadian people in the Union era. Chauveau's novel, Charles Guérin--the earlier of the two and the less well known--gives a hint of what Gérin-Lajoie's later work explores in depth. Gérin-Lajoie's novel, Jean Rivard,

became the incarnation of a myth that was to dominate French-Canadian literature for some time. His novel promoted the social milieu immortalized in Maria Chapdelaine. Indeed on the centenary of his birth it was suggested that he, not Hémon, had captured the true spirit of the French-Canadian rural way of life.⁵

This thesis will examine the lives and works of the authors; the political writings of the period 1840 to 1850; the imaginative writings of the same period; and finally the two novels. The conclusion will attempt to sum up the influence of the political on the imaginative work of each of the authors in question.

⁵Pierre-Georges Roy in Le Centenaire de Gérin-Lajoie, Hommage de la Commission des Monuments historiques de la Province de Québec (Québec, 1924). Published under separate cover by le Bulletin des recherches historiques, XXX (Oct. 1924), 289.

CHAPTER I
LIVES AND WORKS

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie was born in 1824 in the parish of Sainte-Anne de Yamachiche, fifteen miles west of Trois-Rivières.¹ Both his mother and his father could trace their ancestry in Canada to before the conquest. For three generations the family had worked the land.² Antoine, the eldest of seventeen children, showed exceptional scholastic ability and with the encouragement of the local priest was sent to the Collège de Nicolet to complete a classical education. In a biography of M. l'abbé J.-B. Ferland,³ Gérin-Lajoie later described the mingled program of current events, history and literature given them at the collège:

A l'époque où M. Ferland s'empara de la direction des études, certaines branches de connaissances, entre autres l'histoire moderne, l'étude de la langue anglaise, certaines parties des sciences avaient été quelque peu négligées . . . M. Ferland s'efforça de combler cette lacune. Comme la bibliothèque du collège n'était pas encore tout à fait au courant, suivant l'expression bibliographique, il y suppléait autant que possible par des instructions verbales. Durant les récréations du soir

¹Sources used in this section include: H.-R. Casgrain, A. Gérin-Lajoie d'après ses Mémoires (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1912); Léon Gérin, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, la resurreccion d'un patriote canadien (Montréal: Eds. du Devoir, 1925); Louvigny de Montigny, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1925); Norah Story, The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature (Toronto: Oxford U. Press, 1967).

²The original settler, Jean Gérin, was a soldier.

³Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Biographie de l'abbé Ferland, in Le Foyer canadien, III (1865), i-lxxii.

les élèves qui voulaient entendre parler des événements du jour se rendaient à sa chambre; et là, après avoir fait connaître en peu de mots les nouvelles rapportées par les derniers journaux, il prenait occasion de remonter plus haut et de rattacher à ces nouvelles les principaux événements de l'histoire moderne. C'était pour les élèves un petit cours familier d'histoire et de politique. Disons toutefois que sur ce dernier chapitre, (celui de la politique), M. Ferland fut toujours d'une extrême réserve et qu'il ignorait alors, comme il a toujours ignoré depuis, ce que c'était que l'esprit de parti.⁴

This praise of M. Ferland's impartiality is somewhat obviated by a description elsewhere of the course of studies given in Canadian history:

Il trouvait mille moyens d'exciter l'émulation des élèves; il en appelait à leur patriotisme, à leur honneur, cordes sensibles qui manquent rarement de vibrer dans le coeur de ces jeunes hommes chez lesquels les nobles sentiments de la nature ne sont pas encore émoussés. "Vous aurez un jour à lutter contre de puissants adversaires, leur répétait-il souvent: vous aurez à défendre votre pays, votre religion, tout ce que vous avez de plus cher, il faut vous préparer à remplir cette mission avec honneur." Ces paroles excitaient le plus vif enthousiasme dans l'esprit de ses⁵ jeunes auditeurs, et manquaient rarement de produire leur effet.

The somewhat inflammatory tenor of these remarks was offset--and perhaps contradicted--by an equally firm respect for law and order:

Un de ses principaux buts semblait être de former de bons citoyens, et il s'efforçait d'inculquer de bonne heure dans l'esprit des élèves ces idées d'ordre, de respect pour la loi et d'amour du prochain qui font le bonheur des sociétés comme celui des individus.⁶

In 1844 Gérin-Lajoie left the collège and was plunged precipitately (and ill-prepared) into the business of making a living. He sought work first in the United States, but returned, after a fruitless and discouraging seventeen days to Montreal. There, after three months, he found a job that, although badly paid, was undoubtedly influential in

⁴Ibid., p. xxxi.

⁵Ibid., p. xxx.

⁶Ibid., p. xxx.

directing the future course of his career. As an editor for La Minerve⁷-- at that time the mouthpiece of the Liberal party in Lower Canada--he was forced into the thick of the constitutional struggle. In his memoirs he remarks that the job was really too much for him. "D'autre part," comments his biographer, "il reconnaît que son stage dans le journalisme l'a obligé à se renseigner sur maints sujets dont il serait ailleurs resté ignorant, et lui a permis de fréquenter les hommes les plus marquants de la vie publique dans sa province."⁸

For three years working as an editor for the newspaper, he supported the LaFontaine-Baldwin struggle for responsible government. In 1847 he actively participated in the election of Louis-Joseph Papineau, but when Papineau turned against LaFontaine he repudiated his earlier support:

En avril et mai 1848, sous prétexte de répondre à des lettres qu'on lui adressait, M. Papineau publia deux ou trois articles qui prirent le nom de Manifestes, dans lesquels il insultait sans ménagement le parti canadien et particulièrement son chef, M. LaFontaine. . . . J'avais toujours admiré les talents oratoires de M. Papineau, ce vieil athlète politique m'inspirait une espèce de vénération, et rien ne me brisa le coeur comme la nécessité d'abandonner ses traces. Mais il n'y avait pas à balancer, il fallait ou se déclarer ouvertement contre M. Papineau, ou désertier le parti LaFontaine-Morin qui se composait de la presque totalité des Canadiens français, et sous la bannière⁹ duquel j'avais marché et combattu depuis ma sortie du collège.

⁷La Minerve (Montreal) 1826 - 1899. The newspaper once supported Papineau and the patriotic party. Publication was suspended in 1837. After its reappearance in 1842 it became increasingly conservative.

⁸L. Gérin, op. cit., p. 67.

⁹Ibid., p. 75. LaFontaine and Baldwin represented the moderate Reformists. Papineau as the former leader of the patriotic Liberal party of Lower Canada was at first welcomed back on the political scene but rapidly came to represent a too radical image for the now moderate Liberal faction. See Chapter II below for further details.

His biographer suggests that he found the personal animosities of the political scene distasteful and that for this reason he never again participated actively.

After leaving La Minerve he completed his law studies but the legal profession seems to have affected him much as politics had done. In any case he practiced only briefly, preferring the tranquility and security of the civil service. He acted as paymaster for the Ministry of Public Works, as an official translator and finally (1856) as Parliamentary Librarian. During this period the seat of government moved from Montreal to Toronto to Quebec, finally settling in 1865 in Ottawa.

Gérin-Lajoie's literary career began when he was still a student at the Collège de Nicolet. While there he composed a poem, "Le Canadien errant". Sung to the tune of an old ballad, the poem became well known in French Canada. A play, Le Jeune Latour was performed at the Collège de Nicolet in 1844.¹⁰ In 1851 he published a brief text on Canadian Government entitled: Catéchisme Politique ou Elémens du droit public et constitutionnel du Canada (Montréal: Perrault). The movement of government to Quebec city in 1859 brought him in contact with other literary figures of the day in a movement that is sometimes referred to as the "Ecole Patriotique de Québec".¹¹ The group was instrumental in

¹⁰The play was published in September of the same year in two newspapers, L'Aurore des Canadas (Montréal) and Le Canadien (Québec). It was also published in J.R. Hutson's Le Répertoire National (Montréal: Lovell & Gibson, 1848-1850) III.

¹¹The "Ecole Patriotique" was a loose association of writers interested in the preservation and propagation of French-Canadian culture for patriotic as well as literary reasons. Octave Crémazie, P.-J.-O. Chauveau, J.-C. Taché, H.-R. Casgrain, Hubert LaRue, P. Aubert de Gaspé and J.-B. Ferland were among those who were connected at one time or another with the group.

founding two revues, Le Foyer canadien¹² and Les Soirées canadiennes.¹³ Gérin-Lajoie's novel, Jean Rivard, le défricheur was first published in Les Soirées canadiennes, II, in 1862. The second part of the novel, Jean Rivard, économiste appeared in Le Foyer canadien, II, in 1864.¹⁴ Although the political history, Dix Ans au Canada de 1840 à 1850; Histoire de l'établissement du gouvernement responsable¹⁵ was published posthumously in 1888, a preface by H.-R. Casgrain indicates that its publication was deliberately postponed in deference to L.-P. Turcotte whose Canada Sous l'Union appeared in 1871 and 1872. Gérin-Lajoie died in 1882.

For the purposes of this thesis detailed examination of the works has been restricted to two early poems, "Le Canadien Errant" (1842) and "Salut aux Exilés" (1845); the play Le Jeune Latour; the novels, Jean Rivard, le défricheur and Jean Rivard, économiste, and the political history, Dix Ans au Canada.

¹²Le Foyer canadien was published at Quebec from 1863 to 1866.

¹³Les Soirées canadiennes was published at Quebec from 1861 to 1865.

¹⁴The novels were published in separate book form in 1874, 1876, 1877, 1913, 1922, 1924 and 1925. Since the 5th edition in 1932 (Montréal: Beauchemin), they have been published as a single volume. References in this thesis, unless otherwise noted, are to the 10th edition (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1958), which is based on the edition published in 1877 with the author's own corrections and omissions.

¹⁵Québec: Demers. First publication was in Le Canada français, I (Oct. 1888).

Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau

P.-J.-O. Chauveau was born in 1820 at Quebec city.¹⁶ He graduated from the Séminaire de Québec at the age of sixteen with a reputation for exceptional ability. Like Gérin-Lajoie he studied law, opening an office at the age of twenty-one. Three years later, in 1844, he was elected to the legislative assembly as representative for the district of Quebec. His parliamentary career appears to have been rather uneven. He got along badly with the LaFontaine-Baldwin administration (1848) in spite of the fact that he had been elected as one of their supporters. During the Hincks-Morin administration (1851) he fared somewhat better, serving as Surintendant de l'Instruction Publique, a post he held until Confederation. At that time he became Quebec's first Prime Minister--for the Conservative party. After the fall of the MacDonalld-Cartier federal administration in 1874 Chauveau, whose career seems to have become dependent politically on Cartier, was not re-elected.¹⁷ From this time on he held a variety of positions. He was, for a time, President of the Harbour Commission of Quebec, Sheriff of the District of Montreal, professor and eventually Dean of the Faculty of Law for the University of Laval. He died in 1890.

Opinion seems to agree that he was both vacillating and ineffective as a politician--although he had an excellent reputation as an orator--and

¹⁶Sources used in this section include: L.-O. David, Biographies et Portraits (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1876); André Labarrière-Paulé, P.-J.-O. Chauveau (Montréal: Fides, 1962); Maurice Lebel, "P.-J.-O. Chauveau; humaniste du XIXème siècle," Revue de l'Université de Laval, XVII (1962), 32-42; Les Guêpes canadiennes, ed. Auguste LaPerrière (Ière série, Ottawa: A. Bureau, 1881); Le Répertoire National, ed. J. R. Huston (4 vols., 2nd ed.; Montréal: J.M. Valois, 1893) II.

¹⁷Cf. R. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec (Montréal: Valiquette, n.d.) I, 109. "J.-O. Chauveau, ombre de Georges-Etienne Cartier."

that his real vocation was literature. In view of this, it is rather surprising to find that his imaginative literary works were few. He wrote poetry throughout his lifetime, but the total body of his work is not large. The early poems are politically oriented and excessively patriotic. The later poetry is more concerned with folklore or religion. The early journalism is political and patriotic while later articles consist of book reports or reviews of European affairs and avoid comment on the Canadian scene.¹⁸ With his reputation as an orator many of the speeches he delivered were reprinted in the newspapers of the day. These were prized for their patriotic fervour. Most of the publications listed as books in the bibliography appeared originally elsewhere; a series of articles for the Journal de l'Instruction Publique describing the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1859 became Relation du Voyage de S.A.R. le Prince de Galles en Amérique (Montréal: Eusèbe Senécal, 1860); an extended preface to the fourth edition of François-Xavier Garneau's Histoire du Canada was published as François-Xavier Garneau: sa vie et ses oeuvres (Montréal: Beauchemin et Valois, 1883); an extended article on education in Canada for a German encyclopaedia on education appeared separately as L'Instruction Publique au Canada (Québec: Côté et cie, 1876). He wrote a single novel Charles Guérin, parts of which appeared

¹⁸An almost complete bibliography is given in "Bio-bibliographie de Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, L.L.D.", an M.A. thesis by Thérèse-Louise Hébert presented to L'Ecole de Bibliothécaires de l'Université de Montréal in 1944. The bibliography runs from p. 26 to p. 52. The only serious lacuna, noted (p. 51), is the political correspondence for the Courrier des Etats-Unis from 1840 to 1851. The author includes only articles reprinted elsewhere, having been unable to find the original series in the Courrier des Etats-Unis.

serially in 1846 and 1847 in the Album littéraire et musical de la Revue canadienne. The completed novel was published in 1853 (Montréal: John Lovell).

Out of this prolific and uneven body of work this thesis will examine only some of the earlier poems; "L'Insurrection" (1838), "Adieux a Sir John Colborne" (1839), "L'Union des Canadas ou La Fête des Banquiers" (1841), "A Albion" (1848), all of which appeared in Le Répertoire National; articles written for the Courrier des Etats-Unis and Le Canadien between 1840 and 1850, and the novel Charles Guérin.

Under the pseudonym Placide Lépine, H.-R. Casgrain wrote a series of "Silhouettes littéraires" which were reproduced in an anthology entitled Les Guêpes canadiennes. These were published during the lifetime of the subjects. Casgrain draws a thoroughly waspish contrast between Guérin-Lajoie and Chauveau. Describing Guérin-Lajoie he enthuses: "son regard et son sourire étaient d'une douceur inexprimable et le timbre de sa voix . . . paraissait aussi doux." Of his novel he states solemnly: "C'est plus qu'un bon livre, c'est une bonne action."¹⁹ Chauveau on the other hand is described as "un petit homme assez gros, prestement cambré sur sa colonne vertébrale, et qui salue en souriant avec une politesse urbaine. Il entre en se dandinant, un poing sur la hanche, froissant une paire de gants entre ses doigts . . ." Of his novel Casgrain cruelly comments: "Avec des qualités littéraires sérieuses, Charles Guérin est mort sans avoir vécu; tandis que d'autres livres, plus faibles de style, moins ingénieux de fable, resteront parce qu'ils sont travaillés sur le

¹⁹Les Guêpes canadiennes, pp. 228, 232.

vrai, frappés sur l'effigie nationale."²⁰

The contrast--always unfavourable to Chauveau--dominates most biographical sketches of the two men and their work.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 236, 240.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL HISTORY, 1840 - 1850: GERIN-LAJOIE

The influence of political events on the lives of both men is apparent in this brief sketch of their careers. It is not surprising therefore that each in his own way tried to make sense of the years between 1840 and 1850 when the grievances of the French-Canadian people seemed genuinely those of an oppressed race. The image of militant patriotism the French were inclined to project is however, in some ways, misleading. Violence had already been proven ineffective and--as far as the Church was concerned--highly undesirable. The threat of assimilation to an English world was real, but other, less radical solutions had to be found. Gérin-Lajoie and Chauveau belonged to the generation faced with the political dilemma of peaceful revolt. There were "de puissants adversaires"¹ to combat, but the choice of weapons was limited.

In 1851 Gérin-Lajoie published his text-book explanation of the Canadian constitution, Catéchisme Politique. In the preface he indicated his intention of presenting a completely impartial picture, simplified in such a way that it might serve as a guide to the layman:

L'intention de l'auteur n'est donc pas de faire ce qu'on appelle de la politique de parti; il ne recherchera pas quelle serait la meilleure forme de gouvernement pour le Canada; il n'exprimera pas même d'opinion sur le mérite de la constitution qui nous régit - toute question controversée sera soigneusement évitée - il se contentera de donner un exposé de notre constitution, telle qu'elle est; ce sera au lecteur à faire lui-même ses réflexions.²

¹See above Chapter I, p. 6.

²Catéchisme Politique, préface, iv.

The citizens of a colony so recently governed by a system of representative government that had failed to serve them were obviously in need of some better understanding of the powers that controlled their destiny. The book concentrates for the most part on a technical description of how government functions. What it does in addition however, is explain and expand in those areas pertinent to French-Canadian readers. The nature of those explanations and expansions tends to defeat the author's initial impartial intention, since French-Canadian attitudes to the Act of Union and its origins differed substantially from English-Canadian attitudes.

It later became apparent that the Catéchisme Politique was to some extent a sketch for the much more ambitious work, Dix Ans au Canada de 1840 à 1850.³ Explanations and expansions found their place in this attempt to outline the genesis, development and functioning of the constitution that governed the Canadas from 1841 until Confederation.

The readers are assured in H.-R. Casgrain's "Avertissement" at the beginning of this book that:

Ils y trouveront une continuation de l'histoire du Canada à partir de l'époque où Garneau a terminé la sienne. Aucun canadien n'était mieux en état de reprendre l'oeuvre de notre grand historien national. Doué d'un esprit juste, d'un patriotisme non moins élevé et d'un sentiment d'impartialité peut-être plus développé encore, il semblait né tout exprès et s'était, au reste, préparé d'avance par une longue suite d'études et de réflexions, à devenir l'historien véridique et indiscutable de l'époque brûlante qui relie le présent au passé et dont plusieurs des acteurs sont encore vivants.

(Dix Ans, 5, 6)

This image of 1840 to 1850 as "l'époque brûlante qui relie le présent au passé" justifies to some extent a view of these years as more cataclysmic

³Hereafter cited as Dix Ans, followed by page number.

than the conquest. They seem to mark the great dividing point when the latent conservatism in French-Canadian liberal thought emerged into the open to take charge for the next half century.

In examining Gérin-Lajoie's version of what happened during those years, the problem arises of distinguishing between the events themselves and events as they are presented by the author. Inevitably bias is present both in the selection of material and in the author's direct comments on events, in spite of obvious efforts to keep the latter to a minimum. In addition, a persistent habit of quoting carefully selected English opinion, in translation, either to mask or to redeem statements that could be attributed to French-Canadian bias has to be taken into account. It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine exhaustively the historical background of the period. The description and sequence of events in the text of this chapter are based on Gérin-Lajoie's presentation of them.

As in the Catéchisme Politique he begins his account with a description of the Constitutional Act of 1791⁴ and the causes of its collapse. In a detailed exposition of the difficulties that arose between the elected assembly and the appointed bodies he recognizes that the conflict of imperial and colonial interests had something to do with it, but he concludes with a paraphrase of Lord Durham himself to prove the

⁴The Constitutional Act of 1791 (31 George III, c.31) assumed the division of the province of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada. By this Act Lower Canada was given an elected legislative assembly. The legislative council, the executive council and the office of Governor-General were Crown appointments.

usual French-Canadian argument: that the problem was entirely a matter of an irresponsible ministry opposing the wishes of the people.⁵

"Il est difficile de comprendre, dit à ce propos lord Durham, comment des hommes d'état anglais ont pu s'imaginer qu'un gouvernement représentatif et en même temps irresponsable pouvait exister dans une colonie. Si les intérêts impériaux exigent que les officiers du gouvernement soient nommés par la Couronne sans égard aux désirs du peuple, il est clair qu'un gouvernement représentatif dans une colonie est une moquerie." (Dix Ans, 14)⁶

What he refuses to accept in Durham's Report is the latter's understanding of the conflict as basically between French and English. Gérin-Lajoie contends that this was an effect, not a cause, and that Durham's famous solution to drown the French in an English majority was based on quite false premises. Much of the first chapter of the book is devoted to a refutation of Durham's opinions of the French. He points in particular to apparent contradictions in the text of the Report itself to prove that the difficulties in Lower Canada were essentially constitutional:

On trouve dans vingt endroits du Rapport de lord Durham la pleine et entière justification de la conduite des Canadiens-Français . . .

 Mais la réfutation la plus frappante des assertions de lord Durham se trouve dans la conduite même des Canadiens Français depuis le moment où l'Angleterre jugea à propos de les faire participer aux avantages du gouvernement responsable. N'ont-ils pas déployé toutes les qualités politiques qu'on peut attendre d'un peuple

⁵Cf. "Les insurrections qui ont eu lieu dans les deux Canadas en 1837, n'ont été que la conséquence de la mauvaise administration de ces deux provinces, et de l'obstination du pouvoir à ne pas prêter l'oreille aux représentations solennelles de leurs députés en pleine législature, pendant une longue suite d'années." François-Xavier Garneau, Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours (4th ed., Montréal: Beauchemin, 1882) III, 201.

⁶Although this is in quotation marks in the text it is not a translation. Gérin-Lajoie abbreviates the original passage which included qualifying remarks on the confusion caused by imperial and colonial conflicts. See Appendix for the English original.

intelligent? N'ont-ils pas constamment fait preuve de cette libéralité de vues, de cet esprit conciliant, de ce bon sens pratique que l'on regardait à tort comme l'apanage exclusif de leurs concitoyens d'origine anglaise? Et ce qu'ils ont fait depuis, ce qu'ils font encore aujourd'hui ne l'auraient-ils pas fait plus tôt si l'Angleterre eût toujours montré les mêmes dispositions à leur égard? (Dix Ans, 23)

Lord Sydenham⁷ was sent to Canada with the task of having the Act of Union⁸ passed by the two provinces. In Lower Canada the Act was passed by a Special Council, largely composed of English Tories. There were protests both formal and informal, against the terms of the Union and against the legality of an Act passed without the consent of the people. "Le clergé catholique envoya aussi, par l'intermédiaire de ses évêques, une très forte protestation contre la mesure" (Dix Ans, 38).

The Act of Union passed the British parliament in June-July of 1840. Lord Sydenham returned to Canada as the first Governor-General with instructions from the then colonial secretary⁹ to resist, in spite of Durham's recommendations, too great concessions to those demanding responsible government.

In the first election under the Union, Gérin-Lajoie's account highlights the emergence of Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine:¹⁰

⁷Sydenham, Charles Poulett Thomson, first Baron (1799-1841), Governor-General of Canada from 1839 to 1841 succeeding Lord Durham.

⁸The Act of Union (344 Victoria, c. 35) re-united the provinces that had been divided by an order-in-council, August 24, 1791.

⁹Lord John Russell. Cf. CXII Russell to Poulett Thomson in W.P.M. Kennedy, Statutes, Treaties and Documents of the Canadian Constitution (Toronto: Oxford U. Press, 1930), pp. 421, 422.

¹⁰LaFontaine, Sir Louis-Hippolyte (1807-1864), Prime Minister of Canada from 1848 to 1851. He was a member of the legislative assembly of Lower Canada from 1830 to 1837 and a supporter of L.-J. Papineau. Although opposed to recourse to arms he left Canada at the time of the rebellion and was arrested in 1838 on his return. He was released without trial.

Quoique jeune encore M. LaFontaine était depuis longtemps reconnu pour un homme de poids et d'expérience il jouissait de la plus haute estime parmi ses compatriotes, qui le considéraient, avec raison, comme un homme parfaitement honorable et inaccessible à la corruption Au premier rang il plaçait l'égalité et la liberté politiques. Le moyen d'acquérir cette liberté, il le faisait consister dans la sanction de la volonté populaire à l'adoption des lois, dans le consentement du peuple à voter l'impôt et à en régler la dépense, dans sa participation efficace à l'action de son gouvernement, dans son contrôle effectif sur les individus préposés au fonctionnement de cette administration: "c'est en un mot, disait-il le gouvernement responsable, tel qu'on l'a promis à l'Assemblée du Haut-Canada, pour obtenir son consentement au principe de l'Union et non tel que peut-être on l'explique maintenant dans certain quartier".

(Dix Ans, 68, 69)

This electoral address from a man who had sided with the rebels and been imprisoned for high treason provided the platform that the majority of French Canadians eventually embraced. LaFontaine withdrew from this election however, for fear of reprisals against his supporters. Lord Sydenham had already named an all-English executive council and feelings were running high. The "Comité canadien de Québec" spread the following proclamation throughout Lower Canada:

"Vous n'avez pas été consultés sur l'acte d'Union. Cet acte est injuste. Le Haut-Canada a 400,000 habitants, nous en avons presque deux fois autant, et on nous donne le même nombre de représentants. Les conseillers législatifs seront choisis par le gouverneur et nommés à vie par la Couronne. On nous charge de la dette du Haut-Canada, qui s'élève à cinq ou six millions de piastres, et de plus d'une liste civile permanente de £83,000 par année. La langue française est proscrite. Nos droits, nos libertés, nos privilèges comme sujets anglais sont foulés aux pieds. Rien au monde ne doit nous faire consentir à voter pour un seul candidat qui ne se déclarera pas contre cet acte et ces dispositions iniques.

(Dix Ans, 76)

Gérin-Lajoie gives details of the election results: "il y avait sur les 42 membres élus, 23 membres opposés à l'Union, 13 en faveur de l'Union, dont six devaient leurs élections à la violence, un à des menaces de violence, et trois à la proclamation dépouillant de leurs franchises les habitants des faubourgs de Québec et de Montréal. Sur ces treize, sept

étaient des officiers du gouvernement" (Dix Ans, 80). The facts are left to speak for themselves. He records in addition, the unfairness of the numerical vote by which Lower Canada's protest against the Union is rejected: "On a calculé que les membres qui votèrent contre l'Union représentaient plus d'une moitié de la population des deux provinces. On peut voir par là, disait la Gazette de Québec . . . si un gouvernement qui peut obtenir une majorité de 50, représentant une minorité de 161,898 individus, contre une minorité de 25, représentant une majorité de 572,783, peut se dire avec vérité un gouvernement responsable au peuple" (Dix Ans, 91, 92). But he does not pursue this meaning of responsible government. What he reports are rather the efforts on the part of the assembly to assure themselves that the executive council will abide by a majority vote of the assembly. Gérin-Lajoie quotes here, as he does in his Catéchisme Politique the four resolutions of 1841 that led to this kind of responsible government; the battle was to wage over the interpretation of these resolutions which were passed during the first session of parliament held at Kingston after the passing of the Act of Union.

Resolutions three and four contained the key statements:

3. Pour maintenir entre les différentes branches du parlement provincial l'harmonie qui est essentielle à la paix, au bien-être et au bon gouvernement de la Province, les principaux aviseurs du représentant du souverain, constituant sous lui une administration provinciale, doivent être des hommes jouissant de la confiance des représentants du peuple, offrant ainsi une garantie que les intérêts bien entendus du peuple, que notre Gracieuse Souveraine a déclaré devoir être en tout temps la règle du gouvernement provincial, seront fidèlement représentés et défendus.
4. Le peuple de cette Province a, de plus, le droit d'attendre de l'administration provinciale ainsi composée qu'elle emploiera tous ses efforts pour que l'autorité impériale, dans ses limites constitutionnelles, soit exercée de la manière la plus conforme à ses vœux et à ses intérêts bien entendus. (Dix Ans, 105)¹¹

¹¹For the English original see Appendix.

The first session under the Union ended with the death of Lord Sydenham. Gérin-Lajoie tries valiantly to be impartial about the Sydenham regime by quoting, in translation, from an English source:

. . . et les circonstances . . . se réunirent pour donner au gouverneur une grande influence sur la Législature et l'obliger à assumer une part plus considérable de l'administration des affaires qu'il n'eût été nécessaire suivant la stricte théorie de la constitution.

Dans l'état des choses et la situation des esprits à cette époque, il aurait été impossible sans cela de faire fonctionner le gouvernement; et le pouvoir dont s'empara ainsi lord Sydenham fut sagement mis à profit pour l'adoption de diverses mesures destinées à accroître le bien-être matériel et l'amélioration du pays.

(Dix Ans, 110, 111)¹²

But he follows this with quite an opposite point of view taken from the Dublin University Magazine and closes the chapter with an unequivocal condemnation of his own:

Que la conduite et les procédés de lord Sydenham à l'égard des Canadiens français, durant sa courte administration, aient été dictés par les circonstances ou par une autorité supérieure, il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'ils ont été souverainement injustes et cruels; et le nom de ce gouverneur restera dans la mémoire de leurs descendants comme celui d'un roué politique et d'un tyran.

(Dix Ans, 113)

The next session (1842) under Sir Charles Bagot¹³ saw an increase in the ranks of the French Canadians as vacancies in disputed ridings were gradually filled. Included in their number was LaFontaine. His diplomatic handling of conciliatory offers to enter Bagot's executive council resulted in the formation of an appointed body entirely

¹²The passage is accurately translated from Earl Grey, The Colonial policy of Lord John Russell's Administration (London: Bentley, 1853), pp. 203, 204. For the English original see Appendix.

¹³Bagot, Sir Charles, Bart. (1781-1843), Governor-General of British North America (1841-1843) is given credit for giving to the principle of responsible government its first practical application.

satisfactory to the French-Canadian faction. The eulogies of the French-Canadian people for the departed Bagot (he died within the year) had the ring of grateful affection for a benevolent monarch:

Il y eut dans la ville de Montréal, vers le milieu de janvier suivant (1843), une grande assemblée des citoyens dans le but d'exprimer au bien-aimé gouverneur leur reconnaissance des bienfaits qu'il avait conférés au pays . . . (Dix Ans, 142)

But Sir Charles Metcalfe¹⁴, who followed Bagot, was to demonstrate to the French Canadians only too forcibly, that the principles of responsible government had been accommodated, not guaranteed, by Bagot's diplomacy.¹⁵

The dispute that arose between Metcalfe and his executive council hinged ostensibly on the violation of a constitutional principle: that the Governor-General must be prepared to accept the advice of his counsellors as representative of the majority of the members of the assembly. The specific cause however, turned on a question of patronage.¹⁶ Metcalfe had made appointments without consulting his executive council. Gérin-Lajoie's account stresses the violation of the principle rather than the specific cause. LaFontaine and Baldwin resigned over the issue and the dispute centred on the meaning of responsible government with each side

¹⁴Metcalfe, Sir Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, first Baron (1785-1846) Governor-General of Canada (1843-1845), reverted to the position adopted by Lord Sydenham toward responsible government.

¹⁵Metcalfe himself felt that Bagot's illness was all that had prevented the issue of responsible government coming to a head during the latter's reign of office. See J. W. Kaye, Life of Lord Metcalfe (London: Smith, Elder, 1858), p. 333.

¹⁶Cf. "The cornerstone of responsible government was thus laid on the foundation of the control of patronage by the elected representatives of the people rather than by the appointees of the Crown." Mason Wade, The French Canadians (Toronto: MacMillan, 1955), p. 240.

giving its own interpretation. LaFontaine and Baldwin maintained that the Governor-General could not make appointments without consulting them; Metcalfe insisted that the Governor-General's authority could not be nullified by the executive council. Gérin-Lajoie translates (accurately) a portion of the correspondence between the colonial secretary and Metcalfe in which the latter stresses the difference between an independent nation and a colony.¹⁷ He (Metcalfe) postulates a situation in which the interests of the dominant political party are hostile to the mother country to demonstrate that the granting of responsible government as understood by LaFontaine and Baldwin needed some serious second thought.¹⁸ He considered it imperative that Imperial control be maintained and in order to achieve this he took sides with the Tories against the Liberals. This posed a double threat to the French-Canadian Liberals. With the loss of responsible government went the loss of effective political control; the loss of effective control renewed the threat to their distinctive cultural heritage. The double threat precipitated the first split in the ranks of the Liberal party in Lower Canada:

Les Canadiens français, voyant leur destinée en jeu, sentaient le besoin de s'unir plus étroitement que jamais. Dès le commencement de la crise cependant, un bruit pénible avait couru: on disait qu'un des principaux membres de la Chambre, l'honorable D.-B. Viger . . . blâmait la conduite des ministres résignataires et prenait la défense de Sir Charles Metcalfe. . . .
 . . .
 Il y eut comme un serrement de coeur parmi les membres canadiens français lorsqu'ils apprirent que M. Viger se séparait d'eux sur une question d'aussi grande importance. (Dix Ans, 194, 195)

¹⁷Cf. W. P. M. Kennedy, op. cit., CXLII, Metcalfe to Stanley, pp. 489-493.

¹⁸Cf. J. W. Kaye, op. cit., p. 346.

Viger¹⁹ was criticized for the stand he took on this occasion. But the real problem that threatened to emerge from the split in the French-Canadian Liberal party was the still open question of how best to achieve effective political control. Gérin-Lajoie does not enunciate the difficulty in precisely these terms but it would appear that as long as the achieving of responsible government through the combined forces of Upper and Lower Canadian Liberals remained synonymous with French-Canadian political aspirations, any divergent course of action was considered treasonable. At the same time, Viger's acceptance of a post in a Conservative ministry hinted at the possibility that sacrifice of principle to political expediency might be hiding behind the apparent solidarity of the Upper and Lower Canadian Reform parties.

Gérin-Lajoie makes it clear that Metcalfe's stand against the granting of responsible government risked the separation of the colony from the mother country by other, more violent means. The revolutionary image of themselves that the French-Canadians cherished may have been clouded by Viger's actions, but it had not entirely disappeared:

Quoiqu'il [Metcalf] admette que le sentiment public soit tout en faveur du gouvernement responsable tel qu'interprété par les ex-ministres, il est bien décidé, dans le cas où les Chambres voudraient lui imposer les mêmes hommes, de ne pas les accepter, et il espère bien que Sa Majesté ne voudra jamais se soumettre à une dictature comme celle-là, qui peut, suivant lui, amener l'indépendance de la colonie, bien qu'il soit fort possible que la résistance produise aussi la séparation ou une guerre civile. (Dix Ans, 231)

The implication is that Metcalfe's villainy was compounded by his

¹⁹ Viger, Denis Benjamin (1774-1861), President of the executive council of Canada (1844-1846) was arrested in 1838 on a charge of complicity in the rebellion but eventually released without trial. He accepted office under Metcalfe in 1844 but failed to win the support of his compatriots.

conscious courting of disaster.

In the election called in 1844 as the result of Metcalfe's inability to form an executive, Lower Canada returned almost without exception those members who opposed the Governor-General. Among the members elected that year for the district of Quebec was Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau. But the triumph of the Liberals in Lower Canada was offset by the return of a Tory majority in the upper province in support of Metcalfe.

With a Liberal majority opposed to the Governor-General in Lower Canada and a Tory majority supporting him in Upper Canada difficulties arose in the functioning of government which presented an appearance of gross injustice to the French-Canadian faction:

Sur les quarante-deux députés représentant le Bas-Canada, trente votaient régulièrement contre le ministère. Tout ce qu'il y avait d'hommes de talents dans la Chambre était, de l'aveu de lord Metcalfe lui-même, du côté de l'opposition; et cependant on s'obstinait à gouverner ainsi, une infime minorité du Bas-Canada imposant chaque jour ses volontés à la majorité, au moyen de son alliance avec une majorité haut-canadienne. (Dix Ans, 277)

This seemed to argue that each province should be represented on the executive council by whatever party held the majority in that province. The division of the executive on provincial lines was known as the system of the double majority. The attempt to make the system work led to further internal disputes in the French-Canadian Liberal party and the first hints of an overall re-alignment of loyalties. The tendency was to withdraw Liberal support from French-Canadians who accepted posts under Metcalfe, or rather to assume that they had forfeited the support of their compatriots by joining a Tory executive. At the same time there were increasingly indications that a Conservative-Liberal political combination was not entirely unreasonable:

Pendant la dernière session, les conservateurs du Haut-Canada avaient à plusieurs reprises sollicité secrètement les Canadiens-français de se joindre à eux, leur offrant de laisser à leur disposition l'administration des affaires du Bas-Canada. Dès l'année précédente, le Canadien, de Québec, dans une série d'articles sur "notre position en 1844", avait cherché à établir que les conservateurs qui s'étaient opposés si énergiquement à l'union des provinces, étaient des alliés beaucoup plus sûrs et plus naturels pour les Canadiens que les réformistes du Haut-Canada, que dans tous les cas, en faisant admettre le principe que le Bas-Canada devait être gouverné par une majorité bas-canadienne, et le Haut-Canada par une majorité haut-canadienne, les Canadiens-français auraient tout à gagner. (Dix Ans, 304, 305)

Gérin-Lajoie repudiates the appeal of the Conservatives but on grounds that imply noblesse oblige, not political conviction. He suggests that although there was some feeling that the Reformists of Upper Canada were not entirely to be relied upon, the leaders of their party had been sympathetic to the French-Canadian cause and that some loyalty was owed them because of this. The Conservative appeal, although it had nothing to do with responsible government, appeared to offer a form of effective political control to the French Canadians. There were instances in which the offer was accepted:

Cette place de solliciteur général fut donnée à M. André Taschereau, avocat et magistrat de police à Québec. Cette nomination, et l'élection de M. Taschereau dans la division de Dorchester produisirent une certaine sensation dans le Bas-Canada . . . quelques journaux prétendirent qu'il s'opérait une réaction en faveur du gouvernement. Le fait est que la conduite du gouverneur et ses idées sur le gouvernement responsable n'étaient pas plus approuvées alors dans le district de Québec qu'ils ne l'étaient dix-huit mois auparavant; mais on croyait devoir se montrer plus coulant sur ce point, afin de participer aux avantages du pouvoir, et surtout d'avoir une part dans la distribution des deniers publics destinés aux améliorations locales. (Dix Ans, 312, 313. The underlining is mine.)

This adjustment of political principle to political expediency elicits no comment from Gérin-Lajoie. It seems obvious that in spite of the refusal to admit any revision of opinion in favour of Metcalfe, some revisions of opinion about the advantages to be achieved through thoughtful

manipulation of the political processes available to them, had penetrated the French-Canadian electorate.

The continuing weakness of the executive under Metcalfe's successor (Lord Cathcart²⁰) resulted in a public and mildly scandalous revelation of dubious procedures on the part of the government in attempting to build a stronger executive based on the notion of the double majority. LaFontaine reported in the legislature secret Tory attempts to entice him into the executive council, pointing out that this was an avoidance of the real implications of responsible government:

Mais l'on vous dit: Nous voulons seulement nous adjoindre quelques Canadiens comme Canadiens-français. De ce moment, ceux qui entrent ainsi au ministère y entrent non par suite d'un droit constitutionnel, non par l'action de l'opinion de leurs compatriotes, mais uniquement par suite de la faveur, du bon plaisir d'un gouverneur.
Si, sous le système d'accepter des places à tout prix, il est des personnes qui, pour un avantage personnel et momentané, ne craignent pas de détruire le seul bien qui fait notre force, l'union entre nous, je ne veux pas être et ne serai jamais de ce nombre.²¹
(Dix Ans, 331, 335)

LaFontaine's stand brought the division in French-Canadian political attitudes out into the open. Preservation of the French-Canadian nationality was the objective; effective participation in government was the only way to achieve the objective; responsible government was the only way to achieve effective participation in government. There seemed to be general agreement on the first two propositions. Disagreement on the final proposition was responsible for continuing internal dissent:

²⁰Cathcart, Charles Murray, second Earl Cathcart (1738-1859), Governor-General of Canada (1846-1847).

²¹The passage quoted is contained in a letter from LaFontaine to Hon. E.-R. Caron.

Il existait alors à Québec un petit parti canadien qui, après avoir soutenu lord Metcalfe, sans doute parce qu'il ne connaissait pas encore ses vues secrètes, et qu'il le croyait sincèrement favorable au gouvernement responsable, travaillait sans relâche pour augmenter l'influence canadienne-française dans les conseils du gouvernement. Ce parti, bien différent de celui de M. LaFontaine qu'on accusait de vouloir "tout ou rien", se montrait disposé à accepter ce qu'on lui offrait, probablement d'après l'axiome "un je tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras". Nous voulons bien croire que ce parti nourrissait les sentiments les plus patriotiques et qu'il espérait pouvoir obtenir par un esprit de conciliation et de condescendance beaucoup plus qu'on n'aurait obtenu par une fermeté inébranlable. Mais il est facile de voir aujourd'hui que, sans cette tenacité de M. LaFontaine et de son parti, le système de gouvernement paternel de lord Metcalfe, qui de fait ne valait guère mieux que le système suivi antérieurement à l'Union, aurait été établi dans le pays, et peut-être pour longtemps, de préférence au véritable gouvernement constitutionnel ou responsable. (Dix Ans, 366; 367)

The moral distinctions to be drawn between those who believed "un je tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras," and those who supported LaFontaine in his "tout ou rien" are not at all clear. The quarrel turns on means rather than ends. What both LaFontaine and the Quebec party wanted was effective participation in government. They disagreed on how this could be achieved. Gérin-Lajoie appears to give them equal marks for patriotic motivation, and LaFontaine's principles seem less significant in this context than time having proved him to be right. Responsible government becomes conspicuously a useful political tool.

What distinguished the patriotic aspirations of the French-Canadian Liberal party from the political aspirations of Upper Canadian Liberalism was not unrelated after all to the old problem of French-English rivalry which Durham had noted and which Gérin-Lajoie had tried to deny. An analysis of the entire political situation from 1841 to 1846 which Gérin-Lajoie takes the trouble to translate from a letter printed in the

London Morning Chronicle²² supports his thesis that there was a single Liberal party in Canada, motivated by politically liberal ideals and intent on achieving responsible government. While this is undeniably part of the story, just as it was in pre-Union days, it is also undeniably the case that there was more to it than this as far as the French-Canadian community was concerned. Gérin-Lajoie quotes at some length an analysis by Chauveau of the mixed motives of the French-Canadian population which made it possible for both the Tory party and the Liberal party of Upper Canada to woo them politically:

La population française que l'on proscrivait politiquement, se trouvera encore recherchée et, pour bien dire, cajolée à l'excès par les deux partis qui se divisent le Haut-Canada. Les tories lui diraient: "Laissez les réformistes . . . vous vous sacrifiez inutilement pour eux . . . leurs véritables sympathies ne sauraient être avec vous. Vous voulez conserver votre langue, vos lois; vous êtes conservateurs comme nous: les réformistes sont des novateurs impitoyables qui ne vous laisseront rien de tout cela . . .

 de leur côté les réformistes nous disent . . . Nous vous avons aidés à vous défaire des entraves que l'on vous avait imposées . . . Nous abandonner à présent, est-ce montrer cette loyauté chevaleresque qui doit distinguer des descendants de Français? . . . Notre ennemi commun . . . ne vous tend pas la main pour vous faire monter, mais pour s'empêcher de tomber
 L'existence sociale des Canadiens-français et leur position politique offrent des contrastes qui justifient parfaitement les sollicitations si étrangement contradictoires qui leur sont faites.

(Dix Ans, 368-370)

Although Gérin-Lajoie does not draw special attention to this particular moment in his record of events, it seems obvious from his choice of quotations, and from his own comments that this marked a period of political crisis and moral indecision for many French Canadians.

²²A footnote gives the date, September 1, 1846. The passage translated in Dix Ans au Canada runs from p. 373 to p. 392.

Patriotic motives clouded the issues that had to be resolved and confused party loyalties. Did the ideals of political liberalism and cultural conservatism conflict or complement each other? Certainly there must have been an awareness at this time, conscious or unconscious, of the subjacent conservative aims of all French-Canadian political activity.

The repeal of the corn laws in England in the midst of the political crisis in Canada added yet another element of confusion. It was now not the loyalty of the traditionally suspect French Canadians that wavered but that of the Tory business world.

Lord Elgin²³ was named Governor-General at this troubled time and it was hoped that he could find a way out of the impasse that Metcalfe's government had created. Lord Elgin was given instructions to remain strictly impartial as to party and to allow the executive council (or ministry) to be selected by and from the party holding the majority in the House of Assembly. "Une censure indirecte de la conduite suivie par lord Metcalfe" (Dix Ans, 408), comments Gérin-Lajoie. These orders were not made public until long afterwards.²⁴ When Elgin arrived in Canada in 1847 efforts were still being made to juggle appointments to the Tory executive council to achieve a workable combination. A third offer was made to Liberals considered more representative of French-Canadian opinion

²³Elgin, James Bruce, eighth Earl of (1811-1863), Governor-General of British North America (1847-1854).

²⁴Instructions given to Elgin were similar to those sent to Sir John Harvey in Nova Scotia. For content of these see W.P.M. Kennedy, op. cit., CXLIII, CXLIV, pp. 404-450. Gérin-Lajoie translates a passage from CXLIII.

than D.-B. Viger and D.-B. Papineau.²⁵ The French Canadians thus approached refused once again. Convinced that their rights were still threatened there were movements afoot both inside and outside parliament registering vehement protests.

Shortly before the closing of the session an Association constitutionnelle de la réforme et du progrès was formed at Quebec.

"Cette association . . . avait pour but de surveiller et diriger la politique du pays et de veiller aux intérêts généraux" (Dix Ans, 441).

Gérin-Lajoie's description once again tries to imply a generalized Liberal party platform but the Manifesto presented to the people of Canada by this committee the following November, reiterated primarily French-Canadian complaints and called for constitutional and economic reforms to put an end to the abuses that had resulted from the irresponsible ministry in power. It constituted a strong appeal to the French Canadians to unite politically and to make use of the means available to them to correct the wrongs. "On doit se souvenir que partout où le principe électif est admis à quelque degré que ce soit, on peut obtenir les réformes nécessaires sans secousse violente et sans sortir du cercle de la constitution" (Dix Ans, 461).

The Manifesto recommended the establishment of a hierarchy of politically and socially oriented committees beginning with the parish and working up through a vast network of regional committees to a central branch in Quebec. "Nous ne saurions trop le répéter, le succès ne peut s'obtenir que par l'unité d'action, par une organisation forte, constante,

²⁵Papineau, Denis-Benjamin (1789-1854), the younger brother of Louis-Joseph Papineau, did not entirely share his political views.

éclairée" (Dix Ans, 465). At the local level, the committees were to be organized by "les personnes marquantes ou zélées de chaque paroisse" (Dix Ans, 465).

Les comités ainsi établis seront en outre un excellent moyen de travailler au progrès moral et matériel dans toute l'étendue de la province. Depuis quelques années, des citoyens respectables, en tête desquels se distingue le digne clergé du pays, ont fait d'immenses efforts pour opérer une régénération sociale; qui aura pour elle tous les vœux et, dans les objets qui seront plus particulièrement de son ressort, tout l'appui de l'association. Déjà nous devons à cet esprit d'amélioration les progrès de l'instruction primaire, la diminution sensible des ravages causés par le vice hideux de l'intempérance, le perfectionnement de l'agriculture, l'établissement de caisses d'épargnes dans les villes; et, s'il reste beaucoup à faire malheureusement sous tous ces rapports, il n'en est pas moins consolant de songer que, dans un très court espace de temps, l'attention publique a été attirée avec quelque succès vers de si nombreux et de si importants objets. Plus que tout autre moyen, l'établissement rapide des terres publiques nous semble propre à améliorer la condition du Bas-Canada. Nous avons déjà parlé de la concession de ces terres; mais il nous paraît aussi important d'engager la population surabondante des deux rives du Saint-Laurent à tourner elle-même ses regards vers les localités où se trouve son avenir. En recommandant ce point à la considération la plus sérieuse et la plus immédiate des comités qui devront s'organiser dans chaque comté, nous croirons avoir rempli une partie importante de notre mission. (Dix Ans, 466, 467. Underlining in this passage is mine.)

Although the Manifesto ends with a reference to the Liberals of Upper Canada, "Pour nous, pour les libéraux des deux sections de la province, un effort commun et énergique . . ." (Dix Ans, 468), it is no more than a token nod. The final paragraph states: "Notre sort, l'avenir de notre patrie est donc entre nos mains, et notre mémoire sera responsable envers notre postérité de la somme de bonheur plus ou moins grande que nous lui aurons leguée" (Dix Ans, 468). It is hard to believe that the "postérité" the authors had in mind was in any sense Upper Canadian. The Manifesto made it appear that the strength and potential of French-Canadian society was dependent on a tight fabric of social,

political and religious beliefs and that colonization of undeveloped areas by French Canadians would serve both to promote and to safeguard the fabric of those beliefs.

The dissolution so long expected took place in December, 1847 and in the elections that followed the Reform party in both provinces won a majority. Louis-Joseph Papineau (with the help of Gérin-Lajoie) entered parliament for the first time since his exile.²⁶ In his public statements during the elections a hint of the trouble that was to split the Liberals still more violently into opposed forces of moderates and radicals is noted by Gérin-Lajoie. Papineau expressed his support for the Liberal leaders who had taken his place, "Mais il était surpris et affligé de leur modérantisme". Il aurait voulu leur voir agiter le rappel de l'Union" (Dix Ans, 470). As we have seen in the Manifesto the moderate Liberals were now advocating reform "sans sortir du cercle de la constitution." Papineau was criticised for continuing to agitate for the repeal when such agitation served no practical purpose. It must also have seemed to the Liberals, who foresaw a political victory, not the happiest moment to upset the Union for a principle:

Fallait-il donc, encore une fois, pour le seul plaisir de protester, abandonner ceux qui pouvaient nous donner de la force, renoncer à accepter des situations et à commander de l'influence dans les conseils du gouvernement, situations et influence qui pouvaient être d'une immense utilité au Bas-Canada, et lui redonner, en partie du moins, précisément ce qu'on avait voulu lui ravir, ses droits politiques? (Dix Ans, 473)

²⁶See Chapter I, p. 9 . Papineau, Louis-Joseph (1786-1871) was regarded as leader and chief spokesman of the French-Canadian Reform party from 1815 until the rebellion in 1837. He took no active part in the rebellion but went into exile in the United States, then in France. He returned to Canada in 1845 after amnesty to rebels had been granted by the Canadian government.

Gérin-Lajoie's quotation of this excerpt from the Journal de Québec implies his agreement with the principle of accommodation to the Union. But the arguments presented to defend LaFontaine and the popular leaders of the party against Papineau's attacks sound, to the uncommitted reader, only too similar to the arguments advanced by the unpopular leaders²⁷ to justify their actions in accepting posts in a Conservative ministry.

Gérin-Lajoie's account reveals that once in the legislature, Papineau continued to make himself unpopular by criticizing the LaFontaine-Baldwin ministry for precisely this similarity and by continuing his agitation for the repeal of the Union. "En tête du programme de M. Papineau était le rappel de l'Union puis la représentation basée sur la population" (Dix Ans, 486). Both of these had once been the cry of the entire Liberal party, but LaFontaine and the moderates now in power, were in favour of neither. The Union was working for them at this point and equal representation, not representation by population would soon do the same, as the population of Upper Canada overtook that of the lower province. Papineau blamed acceptance of the Union, and of English institutions in general, for the lack of interest in what he considered to be true democracy. He pointed to France and the United States as examples of how it ought to work. He even called on the much vilified Report of Lord Durham to justify his demand for representation by population. In a lengthy speech, reproduced in its entirety, he attacks the system of patronage, the distribution of Crown lands, the building of canals, the institution of the Governor-General, the judiciary, the press, the use of public funds, the mania for unity and over and over again, the

²⁷Denis-Benjamin Viger and Denis-Benjamin Papineau.

Union itself.

Gérin-Lajoie gives LaFontaine's reply to what is termed this "opposition à outrance." LaFontaine points out that consistently followed such a system would have left the French Canadians worse off than before, that if the French Canadians were not crushed, it was because some had been able to work within the terms of the Union and modify it. He reminds Papineau that his own return from exile was a result of their efforts and that his presence in the legislature was in spite of his protests, an acceptance of the Union he claimed to reject. As for representation by population LaFontaine's reply is unequivocally pragmatic:

L'honorable membre, dont l'amour pour les intérêts politiques de ses compatriotes semble être sans bornes, nous dit que la représentation doit être basée sur la population; et par conséquent peu lui importe que ce principe, mis en action, donne au Haut-Canada, dans la représentation, une part plus forte que celle du Bas-Canada. Justice absolue, dit-il, c'est tout ce que je demande. Il peut déclamer ainsi, lui, dont la maxime est: "Périsse la patrie plutôt qu'un principe!" Et moi je lui réponds que ma maxime, bien différente de la sienne, est: "Que je périsse, s'il le faut, mais que mes compatriotes soient sauvés." (Dix Ans 537)

What seems apparent in the exchange is that the Union was acceptable now to most French-Canadian Liberals, not because it was democratic, and not because it was an English institution as Papineau suggested, but because it worked. French Canadians had gained some control over their own destiny. In the battle of words between Papineau and LaFontaine, Gérin-Lajoie cautiously remarks: "M. LaFontaine n'avait pas la facilité d'élocution de M. Papineau, mais il avait beaucoup plus de logique et de concision" (Dix Ans, 529).

In the session of 1849, the bill of indemnity to repay the losses incurred during the revolt in Lower Canada came before the house once more. Indemnities had already been paid in Upper Canada but action in Lower Canada had been deferred year after year. Gérin-Lajoie once again makes use of an English source, in translation, to account for the violence that resulted from the passing of this measure.²⁸ The passage from Grey stresses the angry feelings of the Tory minority in Lower Canada as the result of the loss of political power at home, and of political and economic protection abroad. The bill was passed with an amendment excluding those who had been convicted of high treason or exiled. The amendment was opposed by Papineau and Chauveau, "mais fut, en définitive, accepté par le gouvernement, qui ne voulut pas, par un refus, mettre en danger la mesure principale" (Dix Ans, 555).

Lord Elgin gave his sanction to the bill in the teeth of strong pressures from the English faction to defer it to the Imperial government. Riots followed in which the Governor-General was attacked and the parliament buildings burned by an irate English mob. Lord Elgin's report of the event is translated by Gérin-Lajoie in a passage which implies that it is the French, not the English, who respect and adhere to the principles of responsible government: "La nature des doctrines constitutionnelles qui sont mises en pratique dans cette province, a une curieuse application dans le fait que ce n'est pas la passation du bill par une écrasante majorité des représentants du peuple ou le consentement du Conseil, mais le consentement du gouverneur qui fournit le prétexte

²⁸Earl Grey, op. cit., p. 219.

à une expression de violence populaire" (Dix Ans, 575).²⁹

The following October an annexationist manifesto appeared in Montreal with some 300 signatures. The complaints it registered were however largely economic. Its supporters were considered to be, for the most part, "conservateurs outrés et radicaux désappointés" (Dix Ans, 597). As for the French, Gérin-Lajoie comments: "En général, la population canadienne française se tint en dehors de ce mouvement. L'agitation avait pris naissance chez les torys; ils préfèrent les laisser se débattre seuls" (Dix Ans, 598).

The account ends at a moment when the French Canadians were in a position to demonstrate that their loyalty to English institutions surpassed that of Her Majesty's subjects of English origin. Changes in colonial policy as a result of economic conditions had undoubtedly contributed to the final explosion in the English section of the community and to much of the malaise of the decade. Although Gérin-Lajoie concludes with a passage from an address by Lord John Russell in which colonial independence is envisaged as the result of the policy of free trade³⁰, there is little to indicate that he was aware of how seriously the struggle for responsible government had been affected by these considerations. He seemed to believe that colonial independence would be an act of enlightened benevolence and that reform had been achieved primarily by the actions of men like LaFontaine working within the limits

²⁹The passage is accurately translated from a despatch from Elgin to Grey dated 30th April, 1849. Elgin-Grey Papers 1846-1852, ed. Doughty (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), p. 1461. For the English original see Appendix.

³⁰The speech was given in the House of Commons on February 8, 1850.

of the constitution. The political posture of the English Canadians in Lower Canada was by comparison grasping and immoral; immoral because it flouted authority; grasping because it was motivated by purely economic concerns. The French, not the English, now seemed in a position to carry on the traditions of a constitutional monarchy with a proper (and conservative) respect for the orderly conduct of affairs.

Gérin-Lajoie seems quite unaware however, that this novel state of affairs might have been brought about by changes in French-Canadian political attitudes. His record reveals that liberal principles of responsible government have been invoked to achieve power, limited when that power seemed threatened, and finally re-invoked to protect a desired status quo. The shift from radical to conservative is accomplished in the name of French-Canadian Liberalism but the changes in the ideological principles that informed that Liberalism are never seriously examined.

A continuation of the history into the fifties would have revealed that after LaFontaine's retirement from public life, his spiritual heir and the new leader of the French Canadians, George-Etienne Cartier³¹ was able to form a successful coalition with the conservative party under John A. MacDonald. In ten years the political wheel had come full circle, for Cartier, like LaFontaine and Papineau, had once espoused the radical cause. Gérin-Lajoie mentions him only once, at the moment when he

³¹Cartier, Sir George-Etienne Bart. (1814 - 1873), fought on the rebel side in 1837 and was forced to take refuge in the United States. He was elected to the assembly in 1848 and in 1857 became leader of the Lower Canadian section of the government in the MacDonald-Cartier administration. His hold over the people of French Canada was from 1858 to 1873 almost unchallenged.

reappears on the political scene in 1848:

M. George-Etienne Cartier, avocat de Montréal . . . s'était tout jeune encore, mêlé au mouvement insurrectionnel de 1837-38, et sa tête avait été mis à prix. Après une absence de quelque temps aux Etats-Unis, il était revenu à Montreal, où il s'était adonné tout entier à l'exercice de sa profession . . . Jusque là il s'était constamment refusé à entrer dans la vie publique . . . ses opinions toutefois étaient parfaitement connues: il s'était toujours montré un des plus zélés soutiens du parti LaFontaine-Baldwin. (Dix Ans, 483)

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL JOURNALISM, 1840 - 1850: CHAUVEAU

Gérin-Lajoie's Dix Ans au Canada was the product of mature reflection on events between 1840 and 1850. Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, on the other hand, wrote a series of articles on Canadian political events that appeared contemporaneously, if somewhat erratically, between 1841 and 1850. Articles which appeared in the Courrier des Etats-Unis¹ and in Le Canadien² provide a degree of consecutive coverage of the events already outlined in the previous chapter.

The column which appeared intermittently in the Courrier des Etats-Unis was entitled "Correspondance canadienne" and signed with the initials P.C. In attempting to analyze these articles the reader must take into account the specialized reading public that the newspaper served and the vagaries of Chauveau's literary style. There is for example in the earliest articles, a tendency to be excessively and rhetorically anti-British and while this may in fact reflect Chauveau's feelings in the early part of the decade, it is possible that some of the sentiments expressed were designed to please an American readership.

The contemporary content of the articles in addition, frequently placed Chauveau in the position of having to defend or withdraw opinions

¹Courrier des Etats-Unis was a French language newspaper published in New York city from 1828. Hereafter cited as C.E.U.

²Le Canadien (Québec) 1806-1891. Publication was periodically suspended because of the paper's attacks on the government. Editorial policy favoured the Liberal party and French-Canadian national interests.

and predictions. He shows a certain reluctance to admit error with the result that he is on occasion pushed into untenable positions, or obliged to be self-contradictory. His first comment on the arrival of Sir Charles Bagot is critical. Three months later he is still trying to justify it:

N'ai-je point raison de vous dire que sir Charles Bagot n'a rien fait jusqu'à présent, et que ses nominations et ses autres actes, quels que bienveillants qu'ils soient, ne sont pas même un à-compte sur ce qui nous est dû pour réparer tant d'injustices?³

But the eulogy written at the time of Bagot's death and which is quoted by Gérin-Lajoie in Dix Ans au Canada is overwhelmingly favourable:

C'était un de ces hommes, malheureusement trop rares, qui, sans y mettre le moindre charlatanisme, dans tout ce qu'ils font savent plaire au peuple. "Notre bon gouverneur", tel est le nom, le seul peut-être sous lequel il sera connu par la suite dans la chaumière de nos paysans. (148)

Often the use of a laboured literary conceit, or a particular turn of phrase gives curious--frequently sarcastic--overtones to his sentences. It is not always clear whether these innuendoes should be taken as expressions of personal opinion or accidents of style. Some of his earliest references to responsible government for example associate it entirely with the Reform party of Upper Canada, using terminology that almost repudiates any interest in it in Lower Canada:

Le gouvernement responsable, qui est leur attente, leur Messie, comme le conseil électif était celui de notre ancienne chambre, leur a été accordé en apparence.⁴

Other, similar comments seem to direct criticism not so much against responsible government as such, but against the Reform party of Upper Canada in its failure to support French-Canadian national aspirations.

³C.E.U., XV (12 juillet, 1842), 238.

⁴Ibid., XIV (29 juin, 1841), 214.

Chauveau's political judgements of the entire era indicate in fact that this was--with some notable lapses--the touchstone. His linguistic excesses are most conspicuous in his attempts to state the case for French-Canadian national hopes. His early attempts to analyze the notion of responsible government, conditioned by the French-Canadian political past, ignore any mention of the system of party politics:

En Angleterre, en effet, ce n'est pas parceque les ministres ont promis d'être responsables, c'est parceque les Communes peuvent les frapper d'impuissance, en leur refusant les subsides, qu'ils se retirent au premier échec et laissent la place à d'autres plus habiles ou plus heureux.⁵

His understanding of the possibilities of political alignment with the Conservative rather than the Reform party of Upper Canada as a means of achieving the best possible conditions for French-Canadian national hopes is apparent as early as 1841 and indicates again a certain indifference to party distinctions:

Un phénomène bien curieux à observer, c'est que la dernière majorité contre l'administration se composait de conservatifs, de Franco-Canadiens et de réformistes, ce qui prouve que les conservatifs sentent le prix d'une alliance avec nous et veulent profiter de la faute qu'ont commise un grand nombre de réformistes en nous délaissant. En même tems, cela confirme on ne peut mieux ce que je vous ai dit, dans ma dernière lettre, des combinaisons possibles des partis opposés.⁶

His interest in the achieving of responsible government, even though his understanding of it is still vague, stems from the moment when he becomes aware of the advantages to the French-Canadian cause, paradoxically enough as the result of the oppressive intentions of the Union.

⁵Ibid., (17 août, 1841), 297.

⁶Ibid., (17 août, 1841), 298.

Sous le régime de l'union, devenus une minorité de par la loi sinon de par le fait, les Canadiens français n'ont plus formé qu'un seul corps, et, s'il y avait quelque chose à leur reprocher, ce serait trop de moutonnerie plutôt qu'un manque d'unanimité . . . Cette précieuse qualité de l'unité nous donne, jointe au principe de la responsabilité dans le gouvernement, une assez belle page à remplir dans la politique du pays.⁷

In the election that followed the Metcalfe ministerial crisis Chauveau entered parliament for the first time as representative for the district (le comté) of Quebec.⁸ The despatches sent to the Courrier des Etats-Unis after this date, even though there was now no question as to his Liberal party affiliation, show the same exclusively national prejudice interfering with his most astute political analyses. With some accuracy he blamed Downing street rather than Metcalfe for the crisis: "derrière notre petit cabinet responsable, il y aura toujours le cabinet souverain et irresponsable de St. James; parce que derrière ou plutôt au-dessus de toute politique canadienne, il y aura toujours la politique anglaise."⁹ He saw Canadian politics as the plaything of the British political parties and that the changes in their policies were, in turn, frequently dictated by events in Europe and the United States. The acuteness of this analysis is somehow lost when he goes on to see behind all policies a specific threat to French Canadians:

Les tories ont donc, plus solennellement que leurs devanciers, proclamé le gouvernement responsable, sauf à interpréter plus tard à leur manière ces deux mots que les interminables discussions, élevées depuis, nous font presque regarder comme des mots cabalistiques Dans les mêmes circonstances, les whigs s'efforceraient de nous ravir le gouvernement responsable, principalement à cause de notre origine; les tories veulent nous en ôter quelque chose malgré notre origine.¹⁰

⁷Ibid., XVI (28 nov., 1843), 497.

⁸Dix Ans, p. 252.

⁹C.E.U., XVII (2 avril, 1844), 73

¹⁰Ibid., (2 avril, 1844), 73.

Twenty years after the event, Gérin-Lajoie deplored the divisions in the ranks of the French Canadians caused by the ministerial crisis.

D.-B. Viger's acceptance of a post in the Metcalfe cabinet elicits a similar reaction from Chauveau and a similar intellectual confusion about the consequences of Viger's action:

Différer gravement d'opinion avec ceux près desquels on a combattu pendant si longtemps, accepter un portefeuille dont personne ne veut, c'est sans doute prendre sur soi une grande responsabilité; il est cependant des momens où ce peut être un grand courage et une grande vertu d'en agir ainsi; mais pour se maintenir dans cette délicate position, pour conserver ce portefeuille, mendier l'appui d'une faction ennemi, baiser des mains teintes du sang et engraisées des dépouilles de ses frères politiques, cela ne peut être justifiable à aucun point de vue. Même alors que les questions que l'on discute seraient embrouillées au point de n'y plus rien comprendre, et que la logique de l'esprit pût hésiter, - il y a la logique du coeur qui seule, vaut toutes les logiques du monde et que seule, il faudrait écouter!¹¹

As the crisis continued from session to session Chauveau's despatches show a certain impatience with the struggle, an impatience that once again reflects purely nationalistic aspirations: "A quoi nous aura servi de combattre avec tant d'ardeur pour des libertés dont jouiront seuls nos rivaux et nos ennemis d'aujourd'hui, alors que nous ne serons plus!"¹² If Gérin-Lajoie later made a serious effort to see similarities and common cause between the Liberal parties of Upper and Lower Canada, Chauveau's lack of sympathy with the Liberal party in Upper Canada on the other hand is never concealed. He openly mistrusted Liberals and Conservatives alike:

. . . le parti le plus populaire, dans cette section de la province [Upper Canada] sera toujours celui qui nous dépouillera le mieux.

¹¹Ibid., (2 sept., 1844), 432.

¹²Ibid., (2 sept., 1844), 432.

. . . en fait de sympathies et d'alliance nous pouvons tirer à la courte paille, ou jouer au dés, les deux partis qui se divisent le Haut-Canada.¹³

With the return of Louis-Joseph Papineau to the political scene,¹⁴ Chauveau seemed to shift ground. He began championing the cause of radical reform. With the exception of a brief mention of representation by population--which he recognized as a principle of the American system and which was important to French-Canadian hopes in the early days of the Union--there is, in the early correspondence, little to indicate that he favoured a liberal democracy along American lines. He stressed if anything French-Canadian indifference to the Americans: "La masse du peuple n'aimerait pas plus se faire Yankée que s'anglifier."¹⁵ The radical reform party of Upper Canada on the other hand, he pointed out critically, had been supported during the revolt by Americans: "A eux se joignait presque toute la population yankée, que son éducation, ses préjugés, ses relations, ses intérêts rendaient hostile au gouvernement britannique, quoique vivant sur son territoire."¹⁶

However between 1846 and 1848 a series of articles on Canada appeared in the Courrier des Etats-Unis favouring annexation, attacking the role of the clergy and decrying the advantages of the British connection.¹⁷ The tenor of the articles makes it obvious that editorial

¹³Ibid., XVIII (20 mai, 1845), 167.

¹⁴Papineau returned from exile in 1845 and was elected to the assembly in 1848.

¹⁵C.E.U., XIV (11 janvier, 1842), 549.

¹⁶Ibid., (29 juin, 1841), 213.

¹⁷"De l'Indépendance du Canada", XIX (28 juillet, 1846), 456; "L'Avenir de ce pays - le clergé", XIX (13 août, 1846), 511; "Les Tendances naturelles du Canada", XXI (25 sept., 1847), 84.

hopes of annexation during the years of political crisis were running high. None of these articles are signed. In the issue for Saturday, August 29, 1846--as if to make sure no misunderstandings occur--there is a note informing the readership that all articles written by Chauveau are signed with the initials P.C. None of the signed articles could be considered as advocating even remotely an open break with either the clergy or the British, in spite of frequent verbal attacks on the latter. His championing of Papineau is, in fact, the only indication that his chauvinism might somehow lead him into a more radical political posture. It was a curious moment to arrive at this position. The majority of his compatriots were now inclining toward a more moderate Liberalism.

In a column dated December, 1848, he reviews the first eight months of the LaFontaine-Baldwin ministry under Lord Elgin and in this despatch some of the anomalies of his support for Papineau come to light in his interpretation of the differences that arose in the Liberal party in Lower Canada. Like Gérin-Lajoie he quotes at some length from the Manifesto published by the Association constitutionnelle de la réforme et du progrès. It was understood by many that representation by population had been one of the demands of the Manifesto.¹⁸ Chauveau supported Papineau, against the ministry, in continuing to press for the measure. In Dix Ans au Canada Gérin-Lajoie gave both sides of the argument which were in brief; political expediency versus political principle. Chauveau gives here his reasons for voting with Papineau: "La justice est plus

¹⁸In Le Canadien, XIX (28 mars, 1849), Chauveau reports that LaFontaine disputed this, and argued that the electoral reform demanded in the Manifesto did not mean representation by population.

simple que l'expédience; elle peut avoir des inconvénients, mais si elle n'est pas toujours commode, du moins elle n'est jamais bizarre."¹⁹ But the political integrity of the statement---as so often with Chauveau---is undermined by the possibility of mixed motives. He believed that a new census might favour the French.²⁰

On the question of the Union, however, and the possibility of reform within the constitution, Chauveau differed with Papineau. At the same time he explains at some length that Papineau opposed the Union largely because he believed that the principle of responsible government was unworkable and the Union itself illegal. Any improvements according to Papineau were therefore impossible as long as the Union existed. "Le second [Papineau] faisait contraster tout ce que le premier [the Manifesto] s'était efforcé de faire harmoniser."²¹

If Chauveau was not in sympathy with all that Papineau stood for, there seems no doubt that in finding himself aligned with a reputed radical on some issues, he was placed in a position of seeing the moderate LaFontaine-Baldwin ministry as reactionary, and his own position, by simple contrast as somehow revolutionary.

The articles in Le Canadien date from the 29th of January, 1849, to the 31st of May, 1849, and give a full report of the second session of the third parliament. It was during this session that the bill of indemnity was passed with all its attendant disorders. Chauveau finds himself siding with Papineau, against the ministry, on an amendment to the

¹⁹C.E.U., XXIII (28 dec., 1848), 333.

²⁰Le Canadien, XIX (28 mars, 1849).

²¹C.E.U., XXIII (28 dec., 1848), 334.

bill excluding from benefits those convicted of treason. Chauveau's objections are based on the illegality of the verdicts against the rebels.²² There are further clashes on the subject of electoral reform... LaFontaine pressed for an overall increase in representation while maintaining equal numbers in each of the provinces. Representation by population would, in his opinion, now unjustly have favoured the upper province.

Chauveau's reporting of his disputes with the ministry in this session reveal that support for Papineau may well have been equated in his own mind with opposition to LaFontaine. Clashes between LaFontaine and Chauveau were frequent. Chauveau's constant repetition of demands for improvements to docks, canals, roads and railways in the Quebec area, and his bitter recriminations against the government for failing to provide promised funds for the rebuilding of Quebec²³, met with sarcasm from LaFontaine who rebuked him for concentrating on "méprisables et minces questions de localité."²⁴

When the explosion in the English community finally occurred with the burning of the parliament buildings and the attack on Lord Elgin, Chauveau's period of political equivocation ended abruptly. The description of the fire which he despatched to Le Canadien is prefaced by an appeal to the people to express their loyalty to Lord Elgin and the British Empire and closes with these words:

²²Durham dispensed arbitrary justice. He was later criticized by his own government for unconstitutional behaviour.

²³After the fire of 1845 at Quebec, reconstruction in stone was specified, with the promise of government help. Aid was inadequate to cover the expense of the building materials used.

²⁴Le Canadien, XIX (18 avril, 1849).

Au nom de Dieu, ne perdons pas l'occasion de nous faire une belle position. L'élan spontané de notre population vers un homme et des hommes qui souffrent toutes ces humiliations, parce qu'ils ont voulu le bien de tous est ce qui aura lieu et ce que l'on peut attendre dans cette circonstance.²⁵

He separated from Papineau on the motion of support for the Governor-General and the expression of loyalty to the crown. Papineau, taking exception to a reference which implied approval of ministries past and present, voted against the motion, but Chauveau voting for it, argued that in the interests of restoring order, he would support even the former unpopular ministry. In one of the last days of the session Papineau launched yet another attack in parliament containing criticism of the clergy. He reproached the ministry "de ne s'occuper dans la crise actuelle que de faire fabriquer à l'aide du clergé, qui pour la première fois, dit-il, se mêle ouvertement de politique, des adresses de confiance dans l'administration."²⁶

Neither attacks on the clergy, nor talk of annexation were political moves likely to find serious favour with Chauveau. Papineau was now agitating in both these directions. One of Chauveau's last despatches to the Courrier des Etats-Unis describes the convention at Kingston at which the annexation movement was abortively discussed. Chauveau divides the English factions interested in the movement into three parties; the remains of the old Tory oligarchy, disappointed business men and francophobes. Of the French Canadians he says:

L'idée de l'annexion . . . n'a sans doute rien de bien séduisant . . . Aussi la presse et le parti ministériels, qui d'ailleurs

²⁵Ibid., (27 avril, 1849). This was a special issue of the newspaper.

²⁶Ibid., (28 mai, 1849).

trouvent que tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles, se sont-ils empressés de se déclarer les fermes soutiens du trône et de l'autel.²⁷

In spite of the curiously sarcastic overtones there is no doubt that Chauveau himself on this occasion, as in the past, staunchly supported both throne and altar.

²⁷C.E.U., XXIV (2 août, 1849), 457.

CHAPTER IV

POETRY AND DRAMA: 1840 - 1850

Between 1848 and 1850 a four volume collection of French-Canadian literature entitled Le Répertoire National was published by James R. Huston. In it appeared the works of a great many French-Canadian writers whose only previous showcase had been the newspapers of the day. There were four poems in volume II by Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, two in volume III (written under the pseudonym Josephite), and one in volume IV. Five of the seven (the two in volume III were the exceptions), had been published originally in Le Canadien between 1838 and 1848. Four of these were strongly political in content. I have restricted examination to these four.¹

"L'Insurrection" (1838) and "Adieux à sir John Colborne" (1839) were both inspired by the rebellion and its immediate aftermath.

"L'Insurrection" is divided into three parts. The first part depicts the period before the rebellion as a kind of golden age of effortless delight:

Depuis longtemps régnaient sur nos riches campagnes
La paix et la vertu, ces fidèles compagnes,
Et les travaux des champs à plus d'un laboureur
Semblaient mieux un plaisir qu'une peine, un labeur.
(II, 66)

In part two, paradise is violated by the spectre of war. And it is specifically war, "le démon de la guerre" (II, 67), rather than the English, that at first seems to be the enemy. Threatened though they are the people hesitate waiting for some sign:

¹Reference to poems hereafter will be according to volume and page number in the 2nd edition of Le Répertoire National.

Pour former parmi nous une troupe rebelle,
 Il faudrait une voix qui n'eût rien d'odieux,
 Une voix qui parût nous descendre des cieux;
 (II, 67)

The voice that finally comes is that of the bell: "c'est la cloche qui sonne" (II, 67). But it is first referred to as "le tocsin" and although the implication is unmistakably there, the actual wording of the poem avoids specifying that it is a church bell:

Elle chante d'en haut ce cantique de mort:
 On profane l'autel, on égorge vos prêtres,
 On a souillé le champ où dorment vos ancêtres!
 (II, 67)

The English with their superior forces boast triumphantly of their victory, to which the poet replies:

Victoire, dites-vous?
 Non, non, ce n'est pas là victoire,
 Ce n'est pas une gloire,
 Vous vous méprenez tous:
 Comment ne pas réduire un adversaire en poudre,
 Lorsque l'on a pour soi et le ciel et la foudre?
 (II, 68)

In part three of the poem the defeated French Canadians are represented in the image of two lost children, "Chassés loin de chez eux" (II, 69). They die in the snowy woods praying for the father who had been killed in battle.

The weight of the message is unmistakable and the patriotic fervour that informs it is genuine enough. The poem's main weakness seems to be the result of the author's avoidance in the final stanzas of what is most equivocal in the poem itself: the moral uncertainty of the cause, the real identity of the enemy, the speciousness of the English victory. The fate of the two lost children with its lapse into the sentimentality of the fairy tale conveys not tragedy but a simple evasion of reality:

Quand je serai grand, moi, j'irai dire au bon Dieu
 Qu'il me rende mon père, oui, j'irai dans ce lieu
 Où tu dis que son âme est à présent cachée;
 Il est mort, lui si bon; qu'avait-il fait au roi?
 Ah! J'aurai quelque jour une bien grande épée;
 Je tûrai ces méchants quand je serai grand, moi.

(II, 69)

"Adieux à sir John Colborne" (1839) is a long and bitter diatribe against the military regime of Sir John Colborne.² Chauveau explains that the silent and sombre city is not grieving at his departure but reduced to brute indifference:

Ainsi qu'un mendiant qui déchu de bien haut,
 Sale et déguenillé gît auprès d'une borne,
 Contemplant les palais, qu'il possédait tantôt,
 Aumône et coups de pied, reçoit tout d'un air morne,
 Un peuple qu'on descend vivant dans son cercueil
 Confond les jours de fête avec les jours de deuil.

(II, 142)

The worst evil of Colborne's reign, however, has been his inability to distinguish between who the real villains are and to condemn out of hand the entire French community:

Traiter un peuple entier comme un vil scélérat,
 Ce n'est pas là des rois venger la noble cause.

 Ceux qui passent la vie à forger des tourments
 Pour des hommes par eux contraints à la révolte;
 Qui sèment la discorde, attendant pour récolte
 La mort de leurs rivaux et les biens des proscrits:

 Ceux-là sont les méchants! Ceux-là sont les vrais traîtres!

(II, 143)

He is upbraided for not exerting his power with compassion:

Et tu ne pouvais point du haut de ton trépid
 Parler d'une voix douce à la pauvre victime
 En qui l'on punissait jusqu'à l'ombre du crime? (II, 144)

²Colborne, Sir John, first Baron Seaton (1778 - 1863), Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada (1829 - 1836), appointed Commander-in-chief of forces in Canada, he put down the rebellion of 1837 and 1838. Before and after Lord Durham's period of office he was Governor-in-chief of British North America. He was succeeded by Poulett Thomson (Lord Sydenham).

This is contrasted with the senseless powers of destruction he has released on a defenseless and defeated people.

The poem, although it appears to oppose English rule more directly and venomously than the earlier poem, exhibits nonetheless the same tendency to evade the issue. Sir John is in fact never openly denounced as the embodiment of English oppressive rule, in spite of the implication that the French are hapless victims of oppression. He is attacked for having exercised his legitimate powers unfairly and injudiciously. The comparison with the ragged beggar contemplating the palaces that once were his, loses literary and revolutionary impact with the realization that the beggar doesn't aspire to seize the palace, he merely wants the king to be kind.

"L'Union des Canadas ou La Fête des Banquiers" (1841) was a direct attack on the Act of Union and its opening lines sound clearly revolutionary:

C'est le jour des banquiers! demain sera notre heure.
Aujourd'hui l'oppression, demain la liberté;
(II, 216)

Threats of death and destruction to the oppressor dominate part I of the poem:

D'un côté l'usurier calcule sa richesse,
Et monarque du siècle en son rêve hideux,
Savoure les tourments du peuple qu'il oppresse;
Et ce peuple bientôt constant et valeureux,
Se lève et d'un seul mot ébranle le vieux monde.
(II, 217)

A preliminary quotation from Byron's Don Juan mentions Rothschild and Baring as the villains of the old world but the first part of Chauveau's poem seems to suggest a faceless tyranny. If the precise identity of the oppressor is not yet clear, his rapacious intentions are:

Voyez: la table est mise et pour un seul repas,
 Sur une nappe affreuse et par le sang rougie,
 Les ogres du commerce ont les deux Canadas. (II, 217)

Part II equates the bankers with a politically feudal system of government:

Ces vieux lords décrépits, ces ministres peureux,
 Ces tristes héritiers du féodal vampire! (II, 218)

The poem suggests that while "ces vieux lords" are indifferent to the pleas and protests of a suffering people, they respond with alacrity to any request of the bankers:

Cependant, si Baring³ leur dit: moi je le veux,
 Enlacés comme ils sont aux filets de sa banque,
 Ils n'ont rien à répondre
 (II, 218)

The bankers in their turn, are so completely without principles, that given economic cause they would even face bravely the dangers of liberty:

Pour servir la fortune, idole qu'ils encensent,
 Ils peuvent braver tout, même la liberté! (II, 219)

Chauveau maintains that it is their power that changes the face of the world, and not the actions of the common people, even when liberty is the goal.

Part III gives a brief history of Europe in terms of the forces that have governed it ending with the bankers, who, in the poem, take over from Napoleon. Having seized control of Europe, he warns, they are now trying to gain control of America. America however has "le sol fait pour la liberté" (II, 220), and he asks if they haven't realized that:

.pour enchaîner notre jeune courage,
 Il faudrait avec lui enchaîner l'avenir? (II, 220)

³Baring was the name of a family important in financial and mercantile ventures of the British Empire beginning in the late 18th century. By 1810, the extent of its activities on the continent led the French Prime Minister to remark that the sixth great European power was Baring Brothers. (Ency. Brit., 1969)

It is not until the last lines of the poem that the oppressors begin to look like English Canadians and a clarion call to resist their attempts to exert commercial empire over the people of Lower Canada is finally sounded:

Courage donc, courage, assemble tes enfants,
 Et ceux qui de la France ont eu le sang des braves,
 Et ceux que de l'Irlande ont chassés les tyrans:
 Courage, et tu verras nos maîtres, vils esclaves,
 Humiliés enfin, domptés par l'avenir,
 Pâlier et l'oeil hagard, rejeter inutiles,
 En voyant devant eux le cadavre surgir,
 Les scalpels odieux qui dissèquent nos villes.
 Courage, et tu verras après les jours d'erreur
 Ou règne l'insolence, enfin venir le nôtre;
 Les élus de la fraude et ceux de la terreur,
 Tous ces fruits corrompus, tomber l'un après l'autre,
 Et grandir à leur place, arbre de liberté,
 Gloire de nos forêts, le verdoyant érable; (II, 221)

The outline of the poem, without further comment, reveals the confusion of political, economic and ethnic motives that inspired it. The effect of apparently concentrating on the bankers is somewhat similar to that of the earliest poem in attacking "le démon de la guerre" rather than the English. However the political messages about liberty and the revolt of the oppressed people against their tyrants seems plainly directed in the final stanzas against the English-Canadian merchant class who most certainly had pressed for the Union as a means of eliminating obstacles to economic progress; obstacles which in their view took the shape of French-Canadian resistance to their proposals. It was Chauveau's most daring statement of political revolt, but the message here, as in the other poems seems deliberately evasive. Confused commentary on European affairs and international monetary figures--attempts to somehow place the blame there, as well as on English Canadians--dissipates the case against the English-Canadian business world and obscures the identity of "les élus

de la fraude, et ceux de la terreur."

The opening lines of "A Albion" (1848) sound a different note. Changes have been wrought these seven years in the political climate of Canada: "Salut, fière Albion: salut, reine des mers" (IV, 360). The poem glorifies all that the English nation has achieved through industry, cunning and brute force; but it goes on to examine events in the Europe of 1848 and asks how long England can avoid similar disturbances if she continues to oppress her colonial dependents. The suggestion is made:

Pourtant si tu voulais, tu pourrais voir encore
Par des siècles sans fin, du couchant à l'aurore
Ton nom glorifié.
Il est un mot magique au plus fort de l'orage
Qui des vents furieux sait conjurer la rage;
Ce mot, c'est: Liberté! (IV, 363)

Louis Philippe fled France in February of 1848. By December of that year Lord Elgin had demonstrated to the satisfaction of the French-Canadian faction that their rights were not in jeopardy but the tenor of this poem with its praise of England and its polite request for liberty indicates that a change of attitude had already occurred. Chauveau still talks rather confusedly of Liberty but in terms of its being granted by an enlightened monarchy, not wrested from some ill-defined enemy.

The message contained in all of the poems--and all of them do have a message--must be extracted from such exaggerated and verbose imagery that any intended immediacy of impact is drained away. A straining for literary effect too frequently perverts the message or evades its essential import. Of the four, "L'Union des Canadas", in spite of its confusion--and perhaps because of it--comes through as the most forceful. The rhythm of the short repeated refrain projects a feeling of suppressed rage and potential revolt. Making the bankers the enemy provided a cover for fierce personal

criticism of someone who was not--as Colborne had been--a properly constituted authority. The confusion as to the real identity of the villain heightens in this case the feeling of angry frustration and quite possibly mirrored with considerable accuracy French-Canadian attitudes to the dilemma posed by the Act of Union. In any case, the hurling of verbal thunderbolts, especially when those thunderbolts could be directed against a legitimate target must have assuaged national pride more effectively than images of lost children and dispossessed beggars.

A recent critical analysis⁴ of the revolutionary elements in Chauveau's early poems stresses the verbal violence without seriously examining the targets against which it is directed, nor the uncertainty of its intentions. Attempts to draw parallels between political struggles in Europe and French-Canadian protests against the Union are invariably distorted by colonial or ethnic issues unique to the Canadian scene. In any case, what the critic calls Chauveau's "lyrisme révolutionnaire"⁵--perhaps because it had no firm foundation in radical idealism--proved to be short-lived. Later poems take as their theme religion or folklore and avoid the politically contentious.

Gérin-Lajoie wrote two poems that date from the early years of the Union. "Le Canadien Errant" (1842) and "Salut aux Exilés" (1845). Although both poems dealt with political events and were fervently patriotic they were, in a sense, almost totally apolitical. There are no attacks on the oppressor as in Chauveau, no clarion calls of protest.

⁴Joseph Costisella, L'Esprit Révolutionnaire dans la Littérature canadienne-français (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1968).

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

The poems are rather a poignant reflection of feelings of dispossession and exile. The emphasis is on the emotion itself--not on its political import.

Louvigny de Montigny suggests that there was some dispute as to whether his best known poem "Le Canadien Errant" was written with the Acadians or the exiles of the rebellion in mind.⁶ Others see in it the trauma of the conquest. Whatever the source, the central theme is homelessness, the reliance on a world that now exists only in the mind:

Si tu vois mon pays
Mon pays malheureux
Va dire à mes amis
Que je me souviens d'eux.⁷

In the other poem "Salut au Exilés" he specifically welcomes the return of the exiles but to the restricted shelter of the family hearthside, rather than to a country:

A vous santé, plaisir, au sein de vos foyers,
Braves concitoyens, vivez, dormez tranquilles
A l'abri des orages, à l'abri des dangers.⁸

Although the poem concludes with a pious wish for unity any hope of this actually happening is placed in an uncertain future and the appeal is rather, in turning to "le foyer", to turn one's back on "le pays".

Amis, faut-il déjà troubler votre retour?
Faut-il vous raconter des scènes lamentables,
Et vous couvrir de deuil pendant un si beau jour:
Non, laissons du pays les fastes déplorables;
Sous la voûte des cieux chaque peuple a son tour,
Nos fils auront peut-être un avenir prospère;⁹

⁶Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, p. 68.

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁸Le Répertoire National, II, p. 217.

⁹Ibid., p. 216.

"Le Canadien Errant" is deservedly the better known of the two poems. It conveys in simple language the sadness of exile. The limited intentions of both poems expressed more effectively than any of Chauveau's extended oratory the impact of political events on the private emotions of the French-Canadian people. In this indirect sense they belong to the political literature of the period.

If the form that protest takes in the poems of Gérin-Lajoie is essentially negative, his play, Le Jeune Latour¹⁰, explores more positively the nature of the demands that patriotism makes. The play was performed at the Collège de Nicolet in 1844 before an enthusiastic audience. The historical events portrayed were taken from Michel Bibaud's Histoire du Canada, sous la domination française (1843 ed.). In 1630 Charles de la Tour was said to have successfully defended Cap de Sables (in Acadia) against an English attack commanded by his father.¹¹ Gérin-Lajoie made of his play a classical drama in which the son is torn between filial and patriotic devotion. References in the play to the British constitution and to the dangers in defeat of the loss of language rights and national autonomy made an association with 1844, rather than the supposed historical context of 1630, inevitable. The play was interpreted in the light of current events as a strong expression of loyalty to the French heritage in

¹⁰References to the play give act, scene and page number from volume III of the 2nd edition of Le Répertoire National.

¹¹Later historians discovered that the event was much more complex than Bibaud's account would suggest. Both father and son were eventually considered traitors to France. The struggle revolved around private contests for power and the building of private economic empires. Gérin-Lajoie had apparently no other source of information at the time that would have informed his understanding of what really happened.

opposition to English attempts to conquer by assimilation. More recently Costisella has seen in Le Jeune Latour a direct expression of loyalty to France, a loyalty that: "n'admettait pas l'absolutisme d'Ancien Régime qui, en invoquant le nom de Dieu, voulait obliger les Canadiens français à se soumettre à 'la puissance établie'".¹² This simplistic and rather questionable interpretation would probably have shocked the young Gérin-Lajoie (not to mention the audience at the Collège de Nicolet). The patriotic fervour of the play however, is incontestably a source of merit in the eyes of French Canadians again today, as the prologue to a re-edition in 1969¹³ indicates:

Amour filial ou amour du pays, ce conflit est toutefois sauvé par certains moments lyriques et grandioses où s'affirme le patriotisme sincère du jeune Gérin-Lajoie. Retenons aussi les chansons-prologues de chacun des trois actes ainsi que certaines formules qui ne peuvent laisser, aujourd'hui un Québécois dans l'indifférence. Cette pièce est toujours d'actualité.

Roger's father describes the stand that his son takes at the beginning of the play and maintains throughout in spite of all parental threats and entreaties:

Le devoir selon lui, doit vaincre la nature
Et mon juste désir lui paraît une injure;
La fortune, les rangs, les honneurs, tout enfin
Ce coeur altier le voit avec un fier dédain
Je veux être, dit-il, fidèle à ma patrie. (I, ii, 8)

If Roger is unmoved by temptations of wealth and power, the offer of an English constitution and his reaction to it is somewhat equivocal. The father's offer includes a suggestion that Roger already knows and approves

¹²Costisella, op. cit., p. 123. It should be noted that Costisella mistakenly places the historical events of the play in 1760 rather than 1630. This may have served to distort his interpretation.

¹³This is a reprint of the play exactly as it appears in Le Répertoire National.

of the English system of government:

Aux Français, il est vrai, ce pays peut rester,
 Mais si vous l'aimiez tant, vous serait-il pénible
 De le voir au pouvoir d'un monarque paisible,
 Au pouvoir d'un royaume et d'une nation
 Dont vous devez aimer la constitution? (II,iii,27)

Roger's reply to this is not a denial of the merits of the constitution but a fear that it won't be fully granted:

Mais si l'Acadien voulait enfin se rendre,
 En servant les Anglais pourrait-il bien prétendre,
 A se voir gouverner comme la nation?
 Peut-être n'aurait-il qu'un débile embryon
 De ces sublimes lois qu'Albion préconise.

 Mon peuple aime sa langue; en proscrire l'usage,
 Ce serait le réduire au dernier esclavage. (II,iii,28)

In a long soliloquy Roger recalls the past heroes of New France and his debt of honour to them to uphold the French tradition. (III,ii,41) The father's reasoned pleas are abandoned and he resorts to the purely emotional. Roger is no more moved by the sight of his father pleading on bended knee (III,iv,46), however than he was by more materialistic appeals. The conflict of arms takes place. Roger is victorious and the father is led into his presence in chains. The son's final gesture is to lay down his own arms at his vanquished opponent's feet and to welcome him to Acadia:

Oublions le passé, vivons encore en paix.

 Ces mortels...tu les vois à nos ordres soumis,
 Loin de les opprimer traitons-les en amis;
 Vivons heureux ensemble, et surtout que mon père
 Trouve ici du bonheur l'asile salubre. (III,ix,55)

In spite of a happy ending that seems to suggest both fidelity to France and acceptance of the Union the final message, perhaps because of its dual nature, is difficult to decipher. At least some of the obscurity stems from the uncertain meaning given "patrie", "pays", and "nation", and

by association, the meaning of treason itself.

Roger never uses his father's treasonous behaviour as an excuse for rejecting parental entreaties. To the question "Mais l'amour filial peut-il avoir un terme?" he replies:

Oui, certes, je le pense, et je dois rester ferme,
Si pour plaire à l'object de mon affection
Je ne suis qu'un ingrat envers ma nation. (I,viii,20)

But he makes the point that he has been raised to respect his duty to king and country (II,vi,34), and that in rejecting the paternal appeal, he is acting according to another kind of established precept. If the father's role in the context of the year 1844, suggested a dual authority--the traditional hierarchical society of the past and an acceptance of English rule--the meaning of treason becomes ambiguous and the kind of treason the father has committed is somehow dissociated from the treason that Roger is being asked to contemplate. The meaning of treason for Roger seems clearer in the passage in which he recalls his debt of honour to the heroes of New France. "Héros de mon pays, je veux suivre vos pas" (III,ii,43). It is to this argument, in any case, that the father replies: "Je n'y puis plus tenir" (III,iii,43). The pull between "amour filial" and "amour du pays" is exposed as a confused paradigm of the political dilemma that faced the French-Canadian people. What had to be resolved was how to remain loyal to a cultural tradition without rejecting established authority, at a time when that authority posed a threat to tradition. The rebellious son must weigh the consequences of flouting authority in the name of a more fundamental ideal.

While this posed a genuine and profound dilemma, the solution the play appeared to offer missed out on its potential for dramatic tension.

Roger has made up his mind from the beginning to remain loyal to his cultural tradition. The father becomes an excuse for him to elaborate the reasons for his choice. A successful dramatic transposition of the dilemma would have required the father to assume importance as either an authoritarian or an emotional force to be overcome by a tortured but intransigent son. Since the father's eventual moral and physical defeat is never placed in question, Roger's triumph is deprived of both dramatic and revolutionary implications. By the end of the play the father has been not so much defeated as negated. Having lost the battle he is now not English, not French and not in authority. Defeat even begins to wear the face of salvation as the son welcomes the father to the "asile salulaire" of Acadia. The problem appears to have been solved by a sort of reverse process of assimilation.

At the end of the play Acadia emerges for both father and son as a refuge that is neither French nor English, since the father has lost both nationalities. The amorphous meaning attached to "patrie" solidifies in this image of a haven from the pressures of other worlds. The Acadia of the past--and the past as a whole--becomes a place where the distinctive cultural heritage of New France can prevail; transposed into the terminology of 1844, where the French-Canadian cultural heritage can prevail.

The poetry of both Chauveau and Gérin-Lajoie reflected a state of affairs that provoked rebellion but offered only evasive or negative responses. Le Jeune Latour proposed a tentative solution. Loyalty to a patriotic ideal might be possible--under certain controlled conditions--without the concomittant hazards of opposition to constituted authority. The next step was to set about creating those conditions.

CHAPTER V

THE NOVEL: CHARLES GUERIN

Parts of the novel Charles Guérin appeared in serial form in 1846 and 1847. The complete version was published in 1853.¹ In an "avis de l'éditeur" the book is referred to as "un des premiers sinon le premier roman de moeurs canadiennes, qui ait paru jusqu'à présent" (C.G., v). Both author and editor appeared to attach national cultural significance to its subject. The editor has in fact found it advisable in 1853 to apologize for some aspects of the novel.

Les événemens peu saisissans que l'écrivain raconte se sont passés à une époque où les passions politiques et les animosités nationales étaient très vives dans notre pays. Il a dû faire parler les acteurs de son petit théâtre, comme ceux qu'ils représentent auraient parlé eux-mêmes. Il faut donc espérer qu'on ne lui saura pas trop mauvais gré de quelques expressions un peu vives, même de quelques sorties un peu exagérées, que se permettent quelques-uns de ses personnages. (C.G., vii)

The action of the novel begins in 1830 but the apologetic reference to a period when political passions ran high could apply equally well to the immediate past. The novel is divided into four parts and concludes with an epilogue. The author's didactic purpose is made clear in the opening chapters in which the hero of the title and his brother Pierre are preparing to leave their home on the south shore of the St. Lawrence in order to follow a career. They discuss the limited possibilities open to them:

¹References are to the edition of 1853 (Montréal: John Lovell), hereafter cited as C.G.

Il faut devenir docteur en loi, en médecine, ou en théologie, il faut être, médecin, prêtre, notaire, ou avocat. En dehors de ces quatre professions, pour le jeune Canadien instruit, il semble qu'il n'y a pas de salut. (C.G., 2)

Pierre, in the face of these restrictions has resolved to leave. His plans however have not extended beyond the boarding of a ship that will take him away from Canada. Charles, the younger of the two, originally settles on a religious vocation and later turns to the law. Part I of the novel concentrates on the oppressiveness of the society in which a young French Canadian must make his way. Charles' further discussions with fellow students Henri Voisin and Jean Guilbault stress the overcrowded state of the professions, the rapacity of the English in seizing control of both the land and industry. Charles and his young friends are left with the feeling that they are victims in a world not of their making. The solution proposed is to create one:

-Et où penses-tu que tout ce qui se fait en vienne, quand je te dis que nous n'avons pas de pays: qu'as-tu à répondre?
-Qu'il faut s'en faire un! (C.G., 65)

At least one of the young men, Jean Guilbault is prepared to alter his way of life in order to achieve some sense of independence.

Il poussait jusque dans les détails les plus minutieux, jusque dans les choses les moins importantes en apparence, les conséquences rigoureuses de ses croyances sociales. Ainsi persuadé que les liqueurs brûlantes et les draps brûlés que l'Angleterre nous vend au plus haut prix possible, contribuent à notre décadence et matérielle et morale, l'excellent jeune homme ne buvait absolument que de l'eau ou de la bière indigène, et il s'habillait de la tête aux pieds d'étoffes manufacturées dans le pays. (C.G., 52)

Jean's social beliefs are composed of a complex fabric of religion and politics. The description of his character is that of the ideal young French Canadian:

Gai, spirituel, enjoué, tant qu'il ne s'agissait que de choses permises, le jeune Esculape devenait intraitable, du moment que

l'on se permettait quelque plaisanterie sur la religion, sur la morale, ou sur ce qu'il appelait ses convictions politiques.

(C.G., 52)

Charles Guérin's political convictions however, show an almost total indifference to liberal or constitutional principles as such.

The form that government takes is less important than the principles of the society he hopes to preserve. Political idealism is subordinated to a national ideal.

La politique, à mes yeux, n'est qu'un accessoire, un instrument qui sert à conserver notre nationalité. Que m'importe à moi que mes petits enfants . . . vivent sous un gouvernement absolu, constitutionnel ou républicain, s'ils doivent parler une autre langue, suivre une autre religion que la mienne, s'ils ne doivent plus être mes enfants? Tâchons d'être une nation d'abord, ensuite nous verrons comment nous gouverner. (C.G., 54)

There are passing references to the July revolution, but other comments rejecting not only English but American assimilation make it clear that it is the Frenchness of the events of 1830, not liberty in any egalitarian or democratic sense that interests the young men.

C'est l'ère de la liberté! La France libre et puissante dans l'ancien monde, pourquoi n'aiderait-elle pas, ne protégerait-elle pas une Nouvelle-France, dans le nouveau monde?

At the same time they hope themselves to form the nucleus of a new nobility more truly representative of the French-Canadian nationality.

"Il y a une nouvelle noblesse, la noblesse professionnelle, née du peuple, qui a succédé à la noblesse titrée. Qu'elle y prenne garde, si elle oublie son origine" (C.G., 56). The role of the new nobility is to

protect the lower classes against the process of anglicization, something

the old nobility had failed to do: "Aussi est-elle tombée . . . dans

l'opinion du peuple qui, la voyant elle, fière et opulente envers lui,

ramper aux pieds du pouvoir, dans l'ignorance et les excès, l'a

énergiquement flétrie du nom de noblaille, tout comme il aurait dit valetaille" (C.G., 55).

Henri Voisin, less principled than the young medical student Jean Guilbault has resolved to make his way by whatever means come to hand. Even this is blamed on the English:

. . . quant [sic] tout l'espace est occupé; quand chacun n'a bien juste que sa place au soleil, celui qui veut alors se faire une part un peu large, doit se résoudre à diminuer la part de son voisin sinon à l'absorber tout entière.

La corruption, qui faisait de si rapides progrès dans l'âme d'Henri Voisin, était donc le résultat de la même maladie sociale, qui avait chassé Pierre Guérin loin du toit paternel. (C.G., 85)

In part I of the novel Charles is led astray by the worldly Henri Voisin. Physically and morally debilitated by the evils of the city, Charles, at the end of this section is sent to the country to recover his health and his senses by an exasperated but benevolent employer.

In part II as "le monsieur de la ville" Charles meets Marichette, "la petite habitante" (C.G., 106, 107). His original feelings of urban superiority give way to a recognition of her virtues. The sojourn in the country provides the novel with a love story and an occasion to describe local customs but the solution to the political problems of Part I, in fact, the problems themselves seem to have been forgotten.

In part III the plot thickens melodramatically as Charles now returned to the city, forgets his first love and becomes entangled in the social and legal complications of semi-English society.² His ingenuousness about business, the law and people in general results in the loss of the

²Descriptions of social events which Charles attends include a mixture of English and French names.

remains of the family estate on the shores of the St. Lawrence to a scheming quasi-English villain, M. Wagnaër.³

In part IV the Guérin family reduced in circumstances settles in poor quarters in Quebec. Charles, having learned a bitter lesson now becomes a model of studious behaviour and is rewarded at the death of his employer, by a generous bequest. He inherits one third of his former employer's estate. Marichette inherits the other portion. In the settling of the estate Charles and Marichette are re-united.

In the epilogue the author finally returns to his original didactic purpose. Charles abandons the law and becomes a farmer. "Il s'est proposé de se faire une science de l'agriculture et de cultiver d'après les meilleures méthodes les terres de son beau-père" (C.G., 336). A few years later, concerned by the numbers of young people leaving the parish because of its economic restrictions, he uses his inheritance to found a new parish.

Charles rassemble à la porte de l'église tous les fugitifs et il leur fit un magnifique sermon en trois points sur la lâcheté qu'il y avait d'abandonner son pays, sur les dangers que l'on courait de perdre sa foi et ses moeurs à l'étranger, sur l'avantage et le patriotisme de fonder de nouveau établissemens sur les terres fertiles de notre propre pays. (C.G., 338)

The decision to return to the land, to open up new territories for colonization offers a solution to the problem posed at the beginning of the novel. Charles' brother Pierre, returned home from disillusioning experiences abroad, can exercise in the new parish the vocation he has found as a priest. Jean Guilbault, now a doctor, can exercise his. The three form an elite, the new nobility to lead the common people out of

³ M. Wagnaër is from the Channel Islands. He is a Protestant and a fervent admirer of English business methods, although his name seems to indicate other ethnic origins.

the cul-de-sac of a world of closed opportunities. "-C'est cela, dit Jean Guilbault, voilà une fameuse idée, nous ferons une nouvelle paroisse, et nous la modèlerons d'après nos goûts" (C.G., 339).

In a final section "Notes de l'auteur", not part of the novel, Chauveau states, quite unequivocally, the hopes he cherishes:

Enfin l'auteur des pages qu'on vient de lire a cru devoir contribuer pour sa part au mouvement littéraire, et il a essayé de peindre sur le tissu d'une simple histoire les moeurs de son pays. Il a aussi écrit son ouvrage avec la double préoccupation que doivent causer à tous ceux qui réfléchissent à l'avenir du pays, l'encombrement des carrières professionnelles où se jette notre jeunesse instruite, et le partage indéfini des terres dans les familles de nos cultivateurs. S'il peut contribuer à attirer l'attention de tous les véritables patriotes sur l'oeuvre de la colonisation, il croira, sous une forme légère, avoir fait quelque choses de sérieux.

C'est par ce moyen et par le perfectionnement de notre agriculture que notre existence nationale sera bientôt mise à l'abri de tout danger. (C.G., 358)

If these were Chauveau's serious intentions, the novel fails to fulfill them. Between the posing of the problem in Part I and its solution in the epilogue, the message has lost its meaning. The urban-rural contradictions in the ambitions of the hero render suspect any implication of moral regeneration through colonization. Any suggestion that the rural communities offer a way of life superior to that of corrupt urban centres is defeated by the plot itself. Charles' attraction to Marichette for example is, from the beginning, not based on rustic virtues but on her superiority within her class as the result of a convent education; an education thoroughly criticized elsewhere for its uselessness to anyone who opts for a rural existence. When Charles meets Marichette for the second time, "la petite habitante" has disappeared altogether:

Une servante assez proprement habillée dit au Monsieur que Mademoiselle Marie était dans la grande chambre, et le conduisit

à cet appartement. La grande chambre était un joli salon avec une tapisserie tout autour, quelques gravures bien encadrées, un joli tapis sur le plancher, quelques meubles assez convenables, des pots de fleurs dans toutes les fenêtres, un piano, une petite bibliothèque, et une table couverte de beaux livres.

Il n'y avait plus à se reconnaître chez Jacques Lebrun, tant on y avait pris un air de ville. (C.G., 333)

This "air de ville" is transported to the new parish, in which the teacher, the doctor and their wives, the priest and Charles and Marie form the nucleus of the community. "Madame Guérin est encore l'élégante de l'endroit. Elle y a transporté l'ameublement de son petit salon, revu, corrigé et augmenté. Dans les longues soirées d'hiver on cause chez elle, on y fait de la musique, on y lit en petit comité ce que l'on peut se procurer de plus nouveau" (C.G., 345).

Similarly the moral force of cries against English oppression and English corruption in business, industry and real estate is weakened by plot devices which place the onus on Charles himself. In fact, both Charles, and his father before him, are victims not of English oppression but of their own errors. Both contract debts which place them in legal jeopardy and result in the loss of their property to an unscrupulous villain. The father is the victim of his own extravagance. Charles is the victim of his national prejudices, or as he would himself prefer to see it, of his patriotism.⁴ In neither case is the oppressiveness of the English regime the root cause of their difficulties. Behind Wagner's villainy is a lack of understanding of what is fitting--a readiness to capitalize on the misfortunes of others. It is in fact, the English character, not the English regime that is at fault.

⁴ He is trapped into signing a note by a clever manipulation of his sense of chivalry to a fellow French-Canadian.

The moral significance of Charles' decision to found a parish is destroyed by the fortuitous events that make it possible. He becomes a farmer only when and because he has received an inheritance that allows him to do so. And the new parish he forms in the epilogue is a simple reconstruction of the property he has lost.

Charles y a construit un moulin à scies. Il a aussi une potasserie à une petite distance. Ces deux établissemens naturellement alimentés par les progrès du défrichement l'ont déjà récompensé de ses peines. Il n'est pas énormément riche, car il n'exploite pas les habitans à la façon de M. Wagnaër, mais il jouit d'une assez belle aisance. (C.G., 343, 344)

Charles has not defeated M. Wagnaër, he has taken his place in another setting, and while this may indeed have been some kind of solution, the plot components of it were too transparently unrealistic. Credibility was an imperative of any acceptable solution. The novel nevertheless was striving for an answer to a specific dilemma and while Chauveau may have failed in his attempt, he anticipated by some ten years the novel that was to succeed.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOVEL: JEAN RIVARD

The same economic problems that plague Charles Guérin and his friends are present in Jean Rivard.¹ The need to provide a serious solution to those problems leads the author to disclaim at the outset imaginative or literary intentions:

L'intention de l'auteur toutefois n'a jamais été de faire un roman. . . .il s'est appliqué avec un soin scrupuleux, au risque même d'ennuyer les lecteurs frivoles, à ne rien dire qui ne fût strictement conforme à la réalité.

The thesis that the novel presented on the surface of it is explicitly stated in the same preface.²

Le but de l'auteur était de faire connaître la vie et les travaux des défricheurs, et d'encourager notre jeunesse canadienne à se porter vers la carrière agricole, au lieu d'encombrer les professions d'avocat, de notaire, de médecin et les comptoirs des marchands, comme elle fait de plus en plus, au grand détriment de l'intérêt public et national.

Jean Rivard is essentially a success story. A young man left with a small inheritance buys a parcel of uncleared land. By dint of hard work and phenomenal good luck he achieves, within a fifteen year period, financial independence and personal glory. Jean Rivard's rural

¹References are to the 10th edition (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1958), hereafter cited as J.R.

²Critics, while emphasizing different aspects of the thesis, have tended generally to accept it at face value. Cf. "Il [Gérin-Lajoie] fut un apôtre, un prédicateur infatigable de la fidélité au sol . . ." Camille Roy, Regards sur les lettres (Québec: Action sociale, 1931), p. 15., and "il [Jean Rivard] incarne un mythe: celui du cramponnement à la terre." J.-C. Falardeau, "Thèmes sociaux et idéologies dans quelques romans canadiens-français du XIXe siècle", Etudes françaises, II (juin, 1966), 141.

success is contrasted throughout with the failure of his friend Gustave Charmenil to make his way as a lawyer in the city. The space devoted to the exchange of letters makes Gustave's difficulties in the choice of a profession as much a part of the story as Jean's success.

Jean's uncertainty about his choice of career at the beginning of the novel is solved for him in a dream:

. . . il s'endormit profondément, et eut un songe assez étrange. Il se crut transporté au milieu d'une immense forêt. Tout à coup des hommes apparurent armés de haches, et les arbres tombèrent, ça et là sous les coups de la cognée. Bientôt ces arbres furent remplacés par des moissons luxuriantes; puis des vergers, des jardins, des fleurs surgirent comme par enchantement. Le soleil brillait dans tout son éclat; il se crut au milieu du paradis terrestre. En même temps il lui sembla entendre une voix lui dire: il ne dépend que de toi d'être un jour l'heureux et paisible possesseur de ce domaine. (J.R., 23)

The world of the dream grows in the course of the novel from virgin forest to the city of Rivardville in the thriving township of Bristol. Even early critics of the novel commented, in all innocence it would seem, on the ease with which progress is achieved: "les habitations sortent de terre comme par enchantement . . . si tous nos cultivateurs mettaient en pratique les sages conseils énumérés . . . nos campagnes se transformeraient à vue d'oeil."³

There are attempts to make the dream seem real, with chapters describing the process of clearing the land, planting the seed, maple-sugaring, the harshness of winter, harvest-time, and even "un chapitre scabreux" giving a table of income and expenditure which, in a footnote, the author claims to have drawn from official sources. In spite of this,

³Chs. Ducharme, "Antoine Gérin-Lajoie et Jean Rivard," La Revue canadienne, XXII (1886), 291, 292.

the sum of vague or fanciful information and the omission of pertinent detail leaves the reader with no firm sense of reality. However non-literary, in the usual sense, the author's intentions may have been, what he has created is a fiction.

If the reality of the world in which Jean Rivard achieves success can be questioned, so too can the reality of the role in which he supposedly succeeds. From the beginning he envisages the task before him in terms of goals that have little to do with agriculture. In talking to his friends he finds it expedient to use terminology calculated either to upgrade the role of the "défricheur", or by-pass it altogether in favour of other values: "Je suis devenu propriétaire . . . à trente ans, je serai riche, plus riche, que mon père ne l'a jamais été" (J.R., 29, 30). There seems, in fact, a general conspiracy to look beyond the realities of the task immediately facing him to the rewards of the distant future. His prospective father-in-law argues with a skeptic: "ce que tu appelles le fond des bois . . . ça sera bien vite une paroisse comme Grandpré, et c'est Jean Rivard qui sera magistrat et le plus grand seigneur de la place" (J.R., 56). While the prospects of wealth and power could be interpreted as an attempt to make the role of the "défricheur" more socially acceptable, it is at the same time an evasion of the realities of that role.

The use of Napoleonic imagery throughout the novel effectively masks the realities of harsh, physical labour. The clearing of the forest becomes a military campaign and the "défricheur" assumes the role of a military conqueror:

"Mes amis, dit-il [Jean Rivard], vous voyez ces quinze arpents d'abatis? Il faut que dans deux mois toute cette superficie soit nettoyée, que ces arbres soient consumés par le feu, que les

cendres en soient recueillies, et que ce terrain complètement déblayé et hersé, ait été ensemencé. Nous ne nous reposerons que lorsque notre tâche sera remplie."

Puis se tournant vers Pierre, en souriant: "c'est la campagne d'Italie qui va s'ouvrir, dit-il: pour reconnaître tes services passés, je te fais chef de brigade; Lachance sera sous ton commandement, et toi, tu recevras tes ordres directement de moi. Je ne m'éloignerai pas de vous, d'ailleurs, et vous me trouverez toujours au chemin de l'honneur et de la victoire.

(J.R., 64)

The conquest of the land in military images serves several purposes. The "défricheur" gains status as a soldier and is at the same time reminded of his ancestral roots. In wresting the land from the forest, he is wresting it from the English in terms of both the past and the present. Had the Napoleonic image continued to be used in this way Gérin-Lajoie might well have succeeded in his self-appointed task. However the practical value of the image is abandoned for its value as a symbol of power; justifying the suspicion that the original goal "d'encourager notre jeunesse canadienne à se porter vers une carrière agricole," tends to be forgotten and that beneath attempts to attach value to the role of the "défricheur" lies an admission of other interests, other motives, other values.

The exchange of letters between Gustave and Jean Rivard emphasizes the evasions of Jean's world and of the role he plays in it. Gustave describes the very real hardships in a city where the overcrowding of the professions makes it next to impossible for a young man to make a living. He alternates between a convincing despair over his own situation and credulous admiration for Jean Rivard who has succeeded where everyone else of their acquaintance has failed. The notion of success is still defined, however, in terms of urban society. Gustave is a victim of his world. Jean Rivard is, or becomes, the master of his in every sense of

the term, and it is this aspect of his life that Gustave most admires. Although the theme of the land as "la première source d'une richesse durable" (J.R., 21), is undoubtedly a large part of the success story of Jean Rivard, the message transmitted has more to do with carving an empire than with reclaiming the land. Jean Rivard, soldier, is quickly transformed into Jean Rivard, emperor.

He takes four books with him into the wilderness; The Imitation of Christ, Robinson Crusoe, Don Quixote and a popular history of Napoleon. On the long winter nights he entertains his illiterate helper Pierre Gagnon by reading aloud. The history of Napoleon is far and away the favourite and the image that was so helpful in clearing the land is once again brought into play:

Lui-même [Pierre] ne s'appelait plus que Sancho Panza, et ne voulait pas par respect pour son maître, l'appeler Don Quichotte, il l'appelait indifféremment l'Empereur, ou Sa Majesté, ou le Petit Caporal. (J.R., 45)

Jean Rivard begins to exercise with the growth of the community somewhat arbitrary powers. The map of his farm becomes "la carte de son royaume" (J.R., 151), and decisions are made as to who shall and who shall not be admitted to the new kingdom:

Encore un ouvrier qui vient grossir notre colonie. . . . M. Leduc [a carriage maker] me paraît un homme intelligent et fort respectable, et je suis heureux de le voir s'établir au milieu de nous.

J'ai reçu ce soir la visite d'un jeune homme de Montréal, qui désire s'établir ici comme marchand. Il me paraît assez intelligent, mais je n'ai pas hésité à désapprouver son projet. Nous avons déjà deux petits négociants dans le canton de Bristol, c'est assez. . . (J.R., 155)

His purpose in discouraging merchants is to save his people from themselves: "Les cultivateurs y trouvent trop facilement le moyen de

s'endetter en faisant l'achat de choses inutiles" (J.R., 155).

Rivardville is established as a parish and the arrival of the parish priest, Octave Doucet, provides Jean Rivard with an ally of equal force in the community. The importance of the establishment of the parish as an essential of the political ideal of the community, as well as the religious, is emphasized in the perfect accord of Jean Rivard and Octave Doucet.

Jamais roi, empereur, président, dictateur ou souverain quelconque ne prit autant d'intérêt au bonheur et à la prospérité de ses sujets que n'en prenaient les deux amis au succès des habitants de leur paroisse.

.....
C'était le pouvoir spirituel et le pouvoir temporel se soutenant l'un par l'autre et se donnant la main. (J.R., 166)

As the population in the area grows Jean Rivard's wealth and power increase. The businesses and industries of Rivardville have been built on property Jean Rivard had acquired and set aside for his brothers. Owning the property on which the future town will grow gives him a useful advantage:

. . . il allait pouvoir exercer un contrôle absolu sur l'établissement du village . . . Ce n'était plus la carte de son lot de cent acres qu'il déployait le soir sur sa table, c'était celle du futur village. (J.R., 181)

His helper Pierre Gagnon teases him: "Je savais bien . . . que vous feriez autant que le grand Napoléon. Maintenant que vous n'avez plus d'ennemis à combattre, vous allez donner un royaume à chacun de vos frères" (J.R., 181).

Gustave Charmenil is the first to point out that the notion of the village or parish has expanded into something approaching an even larger political unit: "Parle-moi aussi des belles et grandes choses que tu accomplis dans ta petite république" (J.R., 189).

The suggestion that Jean Rivard's empire is a democratic republic is introduced when the parish becomes a municipality and elections are held for the office of mayor. Jean Rivard is duly elected to office: "la voix publique le désignait d'avance à cette charge importante" (J.R., 206). But Gustave once again points to the larger implications when he refers to him as "roi de ta localité" and indicates the next step up the ladder of success: "Qui sait si tu ne deviendras pas plus tard membre du parlement" (J.R., 209).

As mayor, Jean Rivard works within the democratic process for the benefit of his people. He persuades them with difficulty of the need for municipal improvements in public services, public works and above all education, and that these must be financed by taxing the citizens. The case that Jean Rivard makes for taxation and for education was an attack on a prejudice firmly founded in reality, and a character is introduced into the novel to provide Jean Rivard with democratic opposition. Gendreau-le-Plaideux is described as the living symbol of "l'esprit de contradiction" (J.R., 156). As such he reinforces the image of the community as a republic but since the forces of liberal and enlightened thought are with Jean Rivard, any opposition, any exercise of the democratic prerogative, is made to appear obtuse and reactionary.

Jean Rivard suffers his first and only electoral defeat because of the stand he takes on taxation and education.

Il en fut profondément affligé, mais ne s'en plaignait pas. Il connaissait un peu l'histoire: Il savait que de plus grands hommes que lui avaient subi le même sort; il se reposait sur l'avenir pour le triomphe de sa cause. (J.R., 233)

His concern for improving the lot of the people has been that of a benevolent monarch. He now assumes the role of the deposed monarch and

waits patiently for the tide to turn in his favour, deploring the spirit of dissension, confident in the eventual triumph of right over wrong thinking.

Est-il rien de plus triste que les dissensions de paroisse? Vous voyez au sein d'une population naturellement pacifique, sensée, amie de l'ordre et du travail, deux partis se former, s'organiser, se mettre en guerre l'un contre l'autre

.....
Heureuse la paroisse où les principaux citoyens ont assez de bon sens pour étouffer dans leur germe les différends qui menacent ainsi de s'introduire! (J.R., 233. The underlining is mine.)

Time does of course prove the wisdom of his policies and the people come to him to ask him to stand as their member of parliament in the forthcoming elections. In spite of the corrupt practices of the opposition Jean Rivard wins an overwhelming victory. In the description of the election, the whole functioning of the democratic process is once again seen in an unfavourable light.

When the novel was first published in Le Foyer canadien a long section was devoted to Jean Rivard as a member of parliament in Ottawa. The 1877 edition and all subsequent editions omitted this passage. In it Jean Rivard's disgust with the democratic process, already apparent in the description of the election, becomes even more obvious. He sees it as a breeding ground of vice and corruption. He objects to the whole notion of rigid party loyalties and insists on voting as an independent. When it becomes clear that as an independent he can exercise no power whatever he abandons his seat and refuses to stand again.

De fait, il n'y a que les chefs de partis qui puissent se dire libres, avec cet étrange système de gouvernement. (II, 219)

In this situation he is no longer Napoleon, he is Don Quichotte and he finds the role humiliating (II, 245, 246). It is only in the setting of

the parish that he can contribute to the welfare of his people. The only viable form of democracy is the sort of natural democracy represented by the French-Canadian parish.

Nulle part l'esprit de fraternité n'existe d'une manière aussi touchante que dans les campagnes canadiennes éloignées des villes. Là, toutes les classes sont en contact les unes avec les autres; la diversité de profession ou d'état n'y est pas, comme dans les villes, une barrière de séparation; le riche y salue le pauvre qu'il rencontre sur son chemin, on mange à la même table, on se rend à l'église dans la même voiture.

(J.R., 55)

This image is however, shattered by the class distinctions that obtain throughout the novel between Jean Rivard and his helper Pierre Gagnon and by Jean Rivard's real--as opposed to his alleged--ambitions.

The final section of the novel shows Jean Rivard as prosperous, founder of a city, magistrate, justice of the peace, first citizen of Rivardville and grand seigneur. His large family of brothers have entered business or the professions or the priesthood. Jean Rivard has used prosperity to further the careers of his family in everything but agriculture and with seemingly no great sense of having failed in his mission: "J'aurais voulu voir tous mes autres frères agriculteurs; mais ils en ont jugé autrement, que Dieu soit béni!" (J.R., 288). He is himself "un cultivateur" but far from an ordinary one, just as his farm is far from ordinary: "Le ferme [sic] de Jean Rivard, qu'il me serait impossible de décrire dans tous les détails, me parut constituer une véritable ferme-modèle" (J.R., 261). The difficult life of the "défricheur", never very real to begin with has become part of the distant past.

His helper, Pierre Gagnon, has become a farmer and a land-owner in his own right, but it is not until the final lines of the novel that

Jean Rivard belatedly gives him credit:

Pierre Gagnon, dont je vous ai parlé plus d'une fois, a comme défricheur, beaucoup plus de mérite que je puis m'en attribuer; si l'un de nous deux méritait le titre de héros, c'est à lui, et non à moi que reviendrait cet honneur. (J.R., 290)

Pierre is however not the hero. He is not even the equal of Jean Rivard. His role at the end of the novel, as at the beginning, is that of Sancho Panza to his Napoleon, Jean Rivard.

Jean Rivard has used his imperial role, in conjunction with the governmental unit of the parish, and the powers of the Church within the parish, to benefit the people:

Jean Rivard était trop éclairé pour ne pas comprendre tout ce qu'une localité, formée ainsi en association, pouvait accomplir pour le bien public, avec un peu d'accord et de bonne volonté de la part de ses habitants. (J.R., 205)

But the benefits to the people are also calculated in terms which require certain limitations to be placed on the democratic ideal:

Notre gouvernement municipal, dit monsieur le curé, s'il est bien compris et bien administré, peut, tout en développant et exerçant le bon sens politique et l'esprit de gouvernement chez notre population, devenir la sauvegarde de ce que nous avons de plus cher. Chaque paroisse peut former une petite république où non seulement les ressources naturelles et matérielles, mais aussi les ressources morales du pays seront exploitées dans l'intérêt de notre future existence comme peuple. La paroisse sera notre château fort. Quand même toute autre ressource nous ferait défaut, il me semble que nous trouverions là un rempart inexpugnable contre les agressions du dehors.

Oh! prions Dieu, ajouta-t-il d'un ton pénétré, prions Dieu que la gangrène ne s'introduise pas dans notre corps politique. Nous jouissons de toute la liberté désirable . . . (J.R., 286)

The image of the parish as a "château fort" against vague threats of "les agressions du dehors", brings us back to the notion of "du bonheur l'asile salubre" with which Le Jeune Latour concludes. The parish becomes "une petite république", a territorial entity to house the idea of "la patrie". To be patriotic means to cherish the shape and

purpose of the republic that Jean Rivard has created, the hermetic world of the rural community.

An essential part of that world is its isolation from all other worlds. The empire constructed on the model of the parish is economically self-sufficient. Immigration is controlled for precisely this purpose. Businesses and industry must either be interdependent or able to export. There is no unemployment in Rivardville. There are no protestants in Rivardville. There is no effective political dissent. Economic, religious and political harmony within serve as "un rempart inexpugnable contre les agressions du dehors." This has been achieved however, not by a process of democratization but by separation, and by the exercise of authoritarian political power thinly disguised as a democracy.

Gérin-Lajoie had constructed a fictional world which fulfilled all the contradictory conditions contained in the suggestion that the real purpose of French-Canadian Liberalism in the 19th century was:

de reconstituer malgré les rationalisations issues des idéologies libérales et démocratiques, un société d'Ancien Régime sur les bords du Saint-Laurent . . . de sorte qu'on assiste à la recherche, sous le couvert de la démocratie et d'aspirations libérales ayant un certain caractère authentique d'un impossible isolement qui débouchait sur la constitution d'une société féodale et théocratique.⁴

⁴Fernand Ouellet, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Québec, 1760 - 1850 (Montréal: Fides, 1966), pp. 433, 434.

CONCLUSION

Chauveau's early political journalism, his early poems and the novel railed against the English; English fiscal policies, English colonial policy, English opportunism, English oppression, but he never questioned the one really vital issue of English authority. It seems logical to suppose that if the English were seriously at fault, the answer was to revolt or to break the connection. But in the articles written for the Courrier des Etats-Unis, Chauveau dissociated himself from any policy that advocated either of these. At the same time, his corresponding with a newspaper whose editorial policy favoured annexation is, in itself, a glaring ideological contradiction. In each of the poems examined criticisms of the English range from moderate to radical but the implications of militant protest are consistently evaded in favour of inadequate literary images. The novel, although it clearly states a dilemma at the beginning, offers only an unconvincing solution.

The questions Chauveau's early literary works implied were simply not permissible. His respect for Church authority would never have allowed him openly to advocate revolt against constituted authority. In any case his reasons for militant action were founded on a narrow chauvinism rather than on democratic or egalitarian principles and unlike Gérin-Lajoie he made little effort to disguise the fact. Once the threatening aspects of the Union had dissipated, joining forces with the only available support for a conservative tradition was a natural step.

It is tempting to suggest that his novel fails not because it merely grazed the surface of the problem, but because Chauveau himself had

no faith in the solution it offered, all the while recognizing that it was the one solution that would find favour.

In an article in the Courrier des Etats-Unis on the 9th of November, 1841, he praises the role of the clergy in preserving the French-Canadian nationality against the enemy--in this case both British and American--and for its contribution to colonization in sending missionaries into undeveloped areas:

La confrérie de la propagation de la foi, qui semble plus éloignée encore de tout intérêt politique, concourt cependant au même but. Défricher un petit coin de terre dans la solitude, y bâtir une pauvre chapelle et une misérable cabane pour un missionnaire, c'est un fait qui, en apparence, a bien peu de portée; mais bientôt un village et une paroisse se trouvent debout là où l'on ne voyait que la forêt et une terre inculte; la civilisation a gagné sa victoire de tous les jours sur le désert.

Ce qui retient le paysan canadien sous le clocher qui l'a vu naître, c'est qu'il ne voit point dans les townships où se jettent les émigrés d'Europe, la compagne qu'il veut pour lui et pour sa famille, la religion. Aider à l'y transporter, c'est donc travailler au [sic] grand oeuvre de la colonisation, c'est faire la guerre aux deux plus grands ennemis de notre prospérité, l'accumulation et l'oisiveté des cultivateurs dans les villages, d'où naît le partage à l'infini des terres sur la trop étroite lisière que nous possédons des deux côtés du Saint-Laurent.

C'est par de semblables mesures, c'est en remontant aux véritables sources de la prospérité publique, que nous pouvons améliorer notre situation. (C.E.U., XIV, 441)

The overwhelming influence of this kind of thinking is obvious in both of the novels.

Gérin-Lajoie had the chronological advantage of producing his response to the dilemma a full ten years later than Chauveau. The period of reflection served him well since Jean Rivard seemed to offer a more convincing answer. If Chauveau's evasions of the truth led eventually to

his joining forces with the English,¹ Gérin-Lajoie had moved in the opposite direction. His answer postulates the two solitudes of the English and French worlds. Chauveau, in the end, accepted the Union he pretended to reject; Gérin-Lajoie rejected it while pretending to accept it.

The key to Gérin-Lajoie's later stand is apparent in the two early poems in which the English are not reviled; they are simply ignored. If Le Jeune Latour appears to take the problem of their position of authority over the French more seriously, it is only to demonstrate that, in the final analysis, the solution lies in an "asile salulaire". Jean Rivard sets about the building of that "asile" and the parish becomes the rampart against the incursions of the English world. This policy of isolation successfully resolved the dilemma of flouting authority by the simple expedient of excluding it.

Jean Rivard succeeded as a solution to the dilemma because it fulfilled all the requirements of an acceptable answer: liberal enough (apparently) to satisfy 19th century idealism; traditional enough to protect church and state; isolated enough to ensure cultural purity; economically sound enough (apparently) to be independent and self-sufficient. And all of this encased in an appearance of reality, something which Charles Guérin's literary devices had destroyed.

¹If the early work evades issues, the later work avoids them almost entirely. His much dampened ire can be aroused in L'Instruction Publique over the question of provision for Protestant and Catholic schooling but his reporting of Le Voyage du Prince de Galles en Amérique reflects an eagerness to condone the English monarchy presaged a decade earlier in his exclamation: "Au nom de Dieu, ne perdons pas l'occasion de nous faire une belle position!"

However, the very reasons that account for the lasting image it created in French-Canadian literature, make it from the point of view of pure literature, a bad novel. Everything is sacrificed to the thesis; language, plot, character development. It was imperative that everything be sacrificed for the thesis to succeed, and for the book to be acceptable according to the literary criteria of the day. Casgrain's criticism of Charles Guérin makes this quite clear: "d'autres livres, plus faibles de style, moins ingénieux de fable, resteront, parce qu'ils sont travaillés sur le vrai, frappés sur l'effigie nationale."²

Charles Guérin fell between two stools. The attempt to present the dilemma convincingly is controverted, not aided, by more sophisticated language, plot and character devices. The literary weaknesses of Jean Rivard were its strength; for however just the proofs of literary inadequacy, the social impact of a novel frequently exceeds, even turns to question begging, the quality of its workmanship. Even as a bad novel, there is a certain power in the terrible consistency of Jean Rivard.

The literary merits of a survivor's account of a catastrophe are rarely questioned. The French Canadians by their own reckoning faced catastrophe after the Act of Union. Unfortunately the literary myth that purported to deal realistically with that catastrophe was instrumental in perpetuating what now appears to have been a deepening of the cul-de-sac from which French Canadians sought to escape.³ The failure to understand

²See above Chapter I, p. 12.

³A critic has described the period after 1860 as the beginning of "la Grande Noirceur". G.-A. Vachon, "Une Pensée incarnée", Études françaises, V (août, 1969), 252. The complete passage reads: "1860: le Mouvement littéraire de Québec donne ses premières oeuvres, tandis que la pensée libérale entre en éclipse pour un siècle. Pour un siècle à peine: Québécois d'aujourd'hui, nous reconnaitrons volontiers pour nos vrais pères ces hommes d'avant la Grande Noirceur."

politically the fundamentally irrational, insoluble nature of the dilemma that faced them; to differentiate between political and cultural aims, between radical and conservative ideologies, undoubtedly limited the scope of literary myth. At the same time the myth provided an outlet for the expression of profound beliefs that subsumed, and frequently contradicted, attempts to persuade themselves that they saw events clearly.

Dix Ans au Canada is Gérin-Lajoie's lengthy attempt to convince himself and his readers that French-Canadian aspirations were identical with those of the Liberal Reform party of Upper Canada and therefore non-partisan and conciliatory in intention. In Jean Rivard, on the other hand, the non-liberal, anti-democratic, culturally conservative, essentially isolationist aims of Rivardville are at variance with this.

Gérin-Lajoie's literary achievement, one is tempted to suspect, is related to his revelation, conscious or otherwise, of this positive need to practise self-deception as one of the essentials of cultural survival. One must believe in a constitutional monarchy because monarchies support traditional institutions. On the other hand, one must be alert to the potential menace of a monarchy that is both English and Protestant. (The Napoleonic image, French and Catholic, is an excellent alternative). One must support a liberal democratic ideal when liberal democracy implies that the votes of a united people can constitutionally protect rights and traditions. On the other hand, one must be wary of extensions of the democratic principle which threaten the unity of Church and State as joint powers within the state. One must improve the economic status of the people and encourage population expansion. On the other hand, one must avoid the contamination of other cultural values. Above all the limitations implicit

in the negative corollary of all these aims must never be recognized as in any sense stultifying if the dream of the new society is to succeed. The attempt therefore to make the most conservative aims wear the face of liberal and progressive idealism was an integral but inadmissible part of the French-Canadian national image in the difficult years that followed the Act of Union. In providing what appeared to be a plausible solution to the dilemma of these conflicting aims and aspirations Jean Rivard created a myth which satisfied society at the time, but which successfully disguised, for years to come, the very nature of the dilemma.

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APPENDIX

1. The Report of Lord Durham

It is difficult to understand how any English statesmen could have imagined that representative and irresponsible government could be successfully combined. There seems, indeed, to be an idea that the character of representative institutions ought to be thus modified in the colonies; that it is an incident of colonial dependence, that the officers of government should be nominated by the Crown, without any references to the wishes of the community, whose interests are entrusted to their keeping. It has never been very clearly explained what are the imperial interests, which require this complete nullification of representative government. But if there be such a necessity, it is quite clear that a representative government in a colony must be a mockery, and a source of confusion. (55, 56)

2. Statutes, Treaties and Documents of the Canadian Constitution

3. That in order to preserve between the different branches of the Provincial Parliament that harmony which is essential to the peace, welfare and good Government of the Province, the chief advisors of the representative of the Sovereign, constituting a Provincial administration under him, ought to be men possessed of the confidence of the representatives of the people, thus affording a guarantee that the well understood wishes and interest of the people, which our Gracious Sovereign has declared shall be the rule of the Provincial Government, will, on all occasions, be faithfully represented and advocated.

4. That the people of this Province have, moreover, a right to expect from such Provincial Administration, the exertion of their best endeavours that the Imperial authority, within its constitutional limits, shall be exercised in the manner most consistent with their well understood wishes and interests. (457, 458)

3. The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration

. . . and the circumstances of the time, together with his own talents for business, combined to give Lord Sydenham great influence over the legislature, and to render it necessary for him to take upon himself a larger personal share of the administration of affairs than would have fallen to him according to the strict theory of the constitution.

In the then state of things, and of men's minds, it would have been impossible to carry on the Government; and the power which was thus in fact assumed by Lord Sydenham, was wisely used in passing various measures calculated to promote the material welfare and improvement of the country. (203, 204)

4. Elgin-Grey Papers

The nature of the constitutional doctrines which practically obtain with this section of the community, is curiously exemplified by the fact that it is not the passage of the Bill by an overwhelming majority of the Representatives of the People, or the acquiescence of the Council, but the consent of the Governor which furnishes the pretext for an Exhibition of popular violence. (1461)