

THE GIBRALTAR OF AMERICA.

QUEBEC impresses one as being almost too venerable, too unobtrusive, to be talked about. In its grave dignity it seems a part of nature, simple and elemental. Upon more intimate acquaintance it presents an epitome of a past century, with its monasteries, fortified walls, antique architecture, and the simple, courteous, and conservative society of the Old World. It is, in fact, an American city of Frenchmen governed by England. It is only a quiet town of commercial and ecclesiastical life, although crowned by the ramparts of a citadel. It is picturesque from every point of view, covering, as it does, the end of a high, narrow ridge, rising between the St. Lawrence and the mouth of the St. Charles. Viewed from the harbor it seems a populous cliff,—a confused mass of roofs, rocks, walls, and fortifications, high above the river. The Lower Town lies like a narrow belt, encircling the ridge; here and there a flight of steps, or a street, zig-zags up the bluffs, between the climbing rows of houses and through the fortifications. The view from the citadel is most impressive. You look down, over the jumble of gabled roofs and dormer windows pierced by the minarets of the naval university and many a graceful spire, and past the city walls which crest the cliff, upon the seaport town below. A great river flows through a vast, rolling plain bounded by a horizon of mountains. You are high above the ships, the wharves, the gleaming flood; above the surrounding plain of fields, forests, and villages. The landscape fills you with a sense of its vast proportions, and, as your eye travels over the intervening space to the extreme horizon, your vision is scarcely interrupted, the imagination takes up the clue, and in fancy you penetrate the vast wilderness lying beyond the mountain, and reaching in unbroken calmness to the pole.

"The Walled City of the North" is the heart of a wilderness,—and a heart warm and mellow with European culture. I began a nearer view of the place by taking a *calèche*; and driving from the citadel down through the crooked streets, to a point some distance from the Lower Town; this rapid descent gave me a bird's impression of the place. We seemed, indeed, to be on the wing, following narrow streets and whirling around the most unexpected turns. We flew along the eaves of low houses, skimmed through the air on the ramparts, and felt as if we might, at any moment, make a dive into the clumneys below; we

darted in and out of the oddest places—nooks and corners that might delight a swallow. The whole flight leaves on the mind a confusion of cliff, wall, and rampart; of street, stair, and terrace; of cannon and cloister; of gable and dormer: it is all a spiral confusion; that may or may not uncoil itself at your bidding.

At last I alighted from my flying *calèche* in one of the suburbs, and began my return walk. It was a pleasant summer day, and the St. Lawrence and its shores were astir with life. This suburb, called "The Coves," is a string of small houses close under high bluffs, with a road running in front of them, and wharves at intervals along the beach, the intervening basins inclosed by booms out in the current. The basins are covered with rafts of square timber, and ships lie along the booms. Each ship has a busy group of men on her fore-castle and under her bows, who shout and hoist and send the timbers in through the port-holes. After passing some miles of this timber region I reached the city, where the road narrows into a street, with houses on either side. The lofty and massive docks have a certain homely dignity about them, as they stand unmoved by the great tides and the rush of the mighty river. This Champlain street is the Irish quarter, and the region of Quebec riots. A tavern near by displays on its roof a figure-head of MacMahon, and also the characteristic motto, "Irish rule, or no rule at all." This is the only part of Quebec where you feel distrust; and the rough populace seem entirely out of place in these quaint, modest, old stone houses. You walk on, under the foot of Cape Diamond, at the end of the ridge on which Quebec stands, where Montgomery fell in 1775, while following the same route to capture the Lower Town. It is remarkable to find in the midst of a city, and towering above the houses, a mountain of such proportions, carved into battlements and crowned with an impregnable fortress. The cliffs are engines of destruction, even in times of peace, for every now and then they send down avalanches of snow, or even of rocks, that do great damage.

Although everybody seems to have sufficient leisure for courtesies at the busiest times and busiest places, nobody seems quite a native in this quaint place. The Englishman, in his smart suit and lofty air, is foreign to the old, narrow streets; the British tar, with his



QUEBEC, FROM THE RIVER.

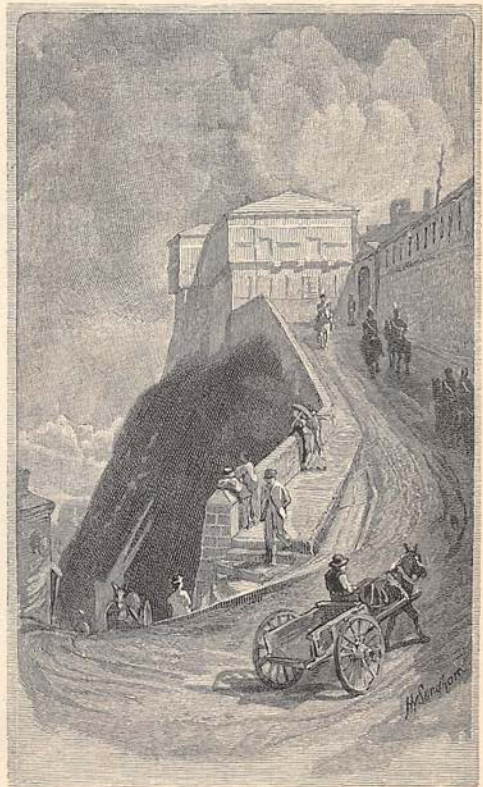
devil-may-care independence, is a stranger ; the Swede is only a looker-on ; the Norwegian is waiting to embark ; the Yankee is trying to "sell out" ; only the French Canadian seemed at home, and even he is somewhat misplaced in the stir of trade. In your wanderings about the wharves you stumble upon the market-place, filled with a dark mass of people, who are overtopped with small heaps of produce arranged in rows between the groups. The buyers, dressed in black or dark colors, wear a critical air, and go many times about the market, seeking the best bargains and purchasing small quantities. You see at once that the domestic life of Quebec is carried on with economy.

They are a courteous, unpretending lot of people, mostly women, with here and there a bright French or rosy English face to break the monotony. The rougher English tongue sounds every now and then above the babble of polite French. The peasants who come to sell are more original than the buyers—they are real peasants in homespun, many of them wonderfully like the Normandy and Brittany people. The men wear gray homespun suits, long-legged moccasins, and felt hats. Their wives are comfortable-looking women, in straight skirts, loose sacques, and broad-brimmed hats,—all home-made,—and although the girls may wear a ribbon or a feather, yet the whole effect is remarkably peasant-like, very primitive and thrifty.

The French-Canadian farmer does not raise large crops, but he generally has at every season some superfluous things to sell. He kills a sheep now and then, or a pair of fowls ; he picks up odds and ends from the garden, and various things made by the industrious women of the household. These are packed and taken to market by the wife and sold for what she can get. This market of the Lower Town is reached by steam-boats from up and



down the St. Lawrence. The peasants spend the night on board, sleeping here and there, on benches, or on their bags and chests. In the morning porters wheel the produce up to the dock. Here the various packages are opened



THE HOPE GATE.

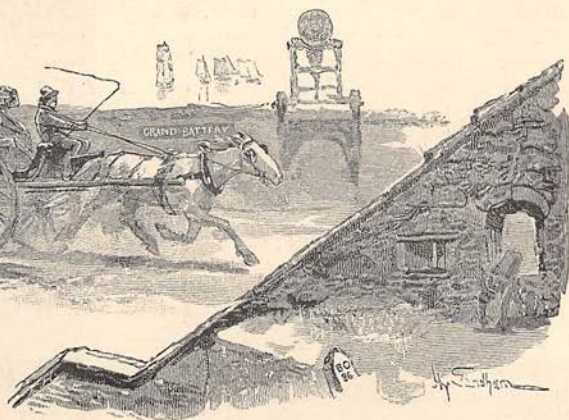
and the stuff is piled up about the chests. The market is full of suggestions of Canadian country life. One sees that most of the labor is done by hand, in small jobs, by the aid of unimproved tools and methods, and that the domestic life of the people is still as primitive as that of peasants in the past century. The inflation of modern life has never reached here. A farmer or his wife will drive thirty or forty miles and back to sell two dollars' worth of potatoes. But as these are the superfluities of his home, he regards such two-penny sales as profitable. A farmer's pile of produce often displays the most incongruous assortment: eggs, mutton, woolen socks, butter, hanks of yarn, pieces of rag-carpet, onions, choke-cherries, and straw hats.



There are also heaps of articles that are commonly the object of some special and permanent business, such as shoes, pottery, brushes, toys, cloths, linen,—nearly all home-made, rough, and cheap. As you stroll about, you notice that their intercourse is quiet and courteous; there is no hawking of wares or importuning of passers, though no purchase is made without an astonishing beating down of the price. The winter market is more picturesque still: the horses look like bales of blankets; the snow-covered ground is strewn with meat, game, and fowls; and the peasants are bundles done up in fur caps, coats, and overshoes.

The little church Notre Dame des Victoires, which is near this market, was one of the first churches built in America: its walls date from before 1690. The first building in Quebec and the first garden in Canada were near the same spot, where Champlain founded Quebec by building his residence in 1608. By

crossing the business streets of this Lower Town, and going to the foot of the cliff, you find one of the most picturesque little nooks on this continent. The Petit Sault au Matelot is a very narrow alley along the foot of the crags, and right beside the chief business



street. It is composed of rickety little houses, used as stables, store-houses, and tenement quarters for chickens, goats, children, and poor families. Here and there a piazza or a gallery across the street gives a view up the crags to the sky; but it is a walled-in region of deep shadows and quaint forms under the battlements and cannon of the Upper Town. This lane, the chief thoroughfare between the Lower Town and St. Roch, was barricaded in 1775, by the English and French to oppose the advance of Arnold. But the American troops took it and held it for a time, expecting to be reënforced by Montgomery. But both expeditions failed.

The Lower Town at this point completes its turn around the end of the ridge on which Quebec stands, and extends along the right bank of the St. Charles River. The mouth of the river has been inclosed by a breakwater to make a basin for schooners and coasting craft. The narrow flats between the cliffs and the river are covered with store-houses, lumber-yards, and factories. But in a few steps you leave this commercial water-front, and enter St. Roch, the pure French quarter of Quebec. It is for the most part a quiet region of modest homes, where you peep now and then into the domestic life of the people. Quebec has been destroyed by fires, and rebuilt since 1845; but the people each time, according to tradition, have rebuilt the houses, and even the crooked streets, very much according to the old plans. In wandering about the city you constantly speculate about the interior of the homes; for the houses are of the utmost irregularity in size, and of various simple forms to suit the angles of the streets and the means or taste of the builders. They have a general type: low walls, one or one and a half stories high, small windows, steep, high roofs, with one or two stories of dormer windows, and massive chimneys at the gable-ends. The picturesqueness of the houses lies as much in the diversity of their sizes and positions as in their strong and effective forms. And then they have a pleasant, moral aspect; for, although they are small, yet they are built of brick or stone, and there are no suggestions in them either of the shanty or of the pretentious city house. St. Roch, off the main street, is a region of these modest homes where small industries are carried on. The *porte-cochères* standing open

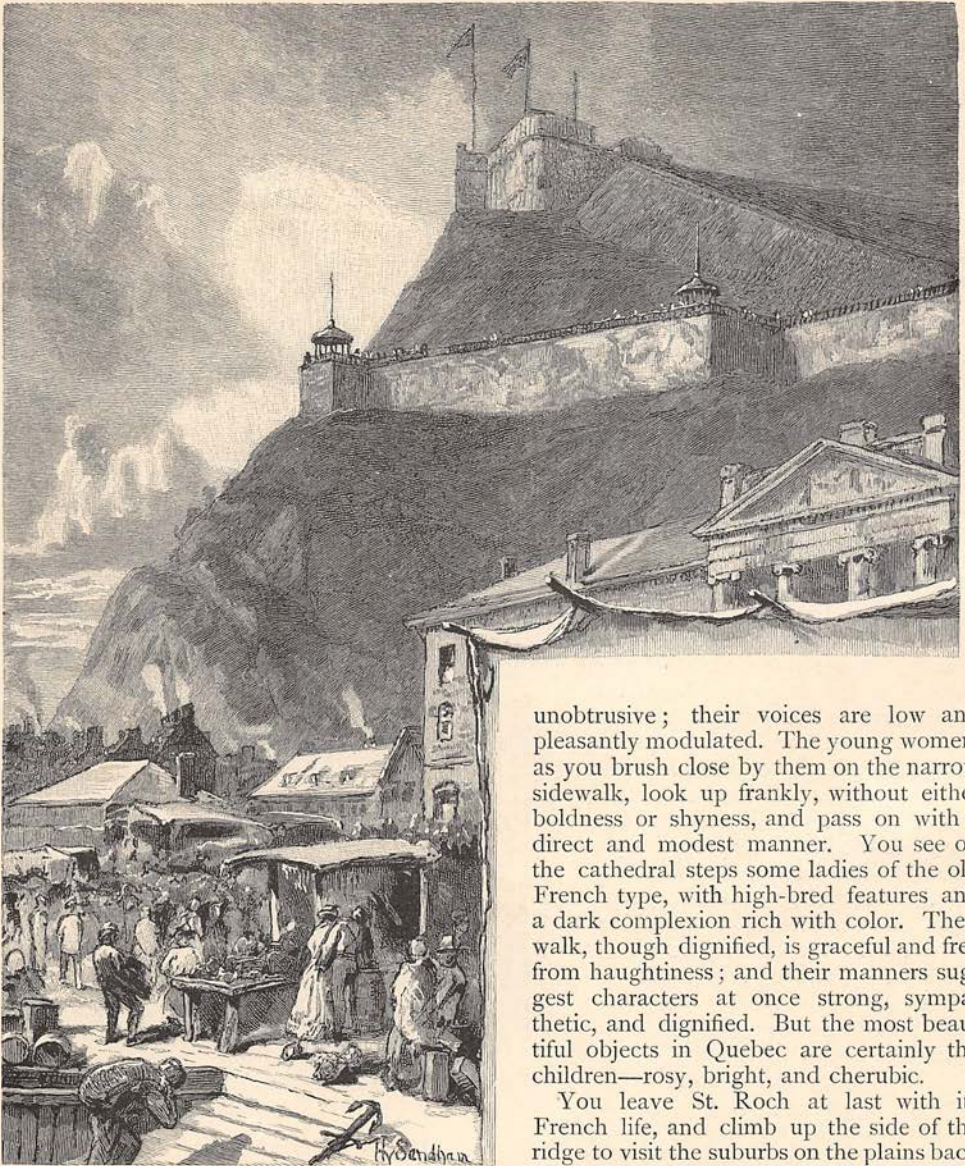
afford glimpses of shadowy court-yards, where artisans are working at their trades in the midst of their children; or you may see a horse passing and repassing an open door, while he turns a tanner's bark-mill, crunching in the darkness beyond. Now you look through a window and see a blacksmith's forge, or a wheelwright's bench, strewn with tools. These shops are under the living-rooms. One sees here and there the angular, wrinkled face of a Nor-



BREAKNECK STAIRS, CHAMPLAIN STREET.

mandy grandmother framed in a white cap. The notary and the architect also work at home. There are scarcely any signs on the streets. Even the corner grocery-store does not blaze with golden letters; it displays in a window a broom, or at the door a bunch of birch-bark; it does not seem a hard, commercial place of business, but an informal, friendly house, where you might borrow a little tea or sugar.

Quebec is, in fact, a quiet village of 68,000 people; you might think it much less of a place than it really is when you see the lamp-lighter cleaning the chimneys and trimming the wicks of the street-lamps.



THE CITADEL.

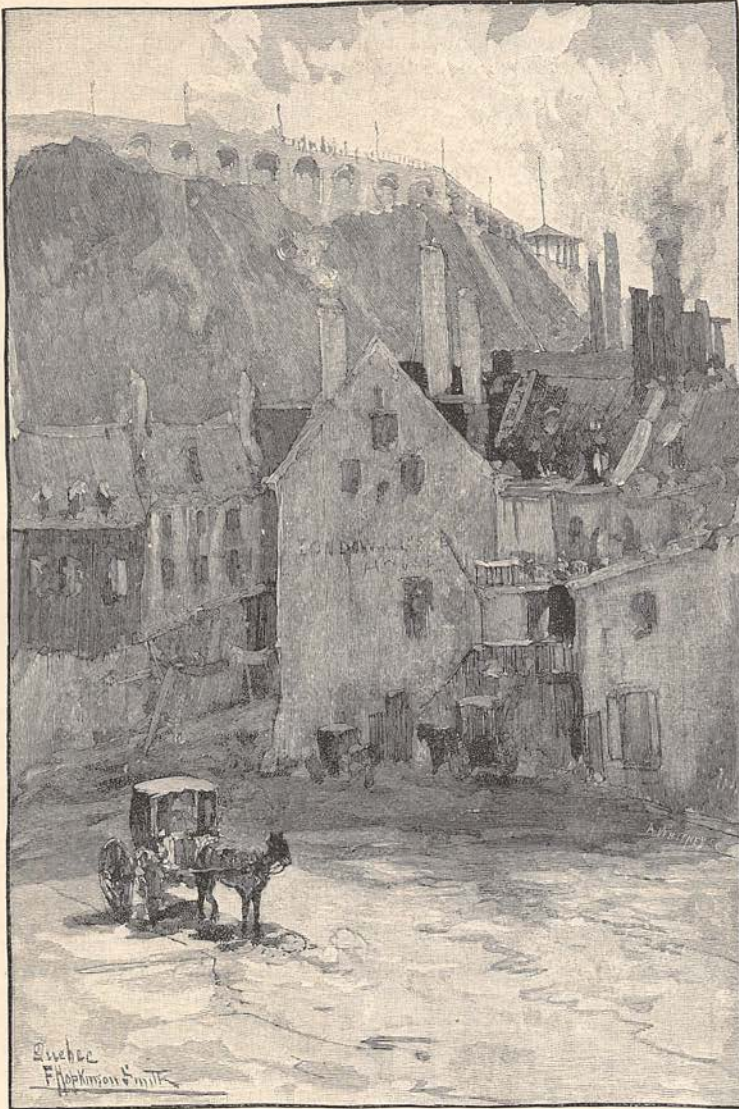
The French Canadian people have had the rare taste or luck to keep their surroundings in harmony with their character. I imagine the city would be dull, or even distasteful, if its drowsy and romantic spirit were replaced by a coarser life. The women of Quebec are attractive by their appearance or good health. Few of them are pretty, but many are good-looking and pleasant. You meet them at almost any hour, returning from mass or confession, dressed always in dark colors, and walking with a slow gait that might be taken for a sign of meditation. Their manners are

unobtrusive; their voices are low and pleasantly modulated. The young women, as you brush close by them on the narrow sidewalk, look up frankly, without either boldness or shyness, and pass on with a direct and modest manner. You see on the cathedral steps some ladies of the old French type, with high-bred features and a dark complexion rich with color. Their walk, though dignified, is graceful and free from haughtiness; and their manners suggest characters at once strong, sympathetic, and dignified. But the most beautiful objects in Quebec are certainly the children—rosy, bright, and cherubic.

You leave St. Roch at last with its French life, and climb up the side of the ridge to visit the suburbs on the plains back of the Upper Town. The chief attraction of this region is the extensive views it commands, either southward over the St. Lawrence and its opposite bluffs, or northward across the valley of the St. Charles and the slopes beyond running back to the mountains. You see in the distance Indian Lorette, Beauport, and many other French-Canadian villages; Montmorency Falls, many lakes among the foot-hills, and other attractive resorts, are scattered about, within the limits of the vast horizon. Indeed, few cities in the world may boast of such suburbs as Quebec; for the scenery through which you drive is not only beautiful in details, but large and noble in

proportions; and the French-Canadian villages and farmers are devoid of the raw, inharmonious, or glaring elements that mar so many country scenes on this continent. But these suburbs on the plains back of the Upper Town are of quite another sort. They are country-houses and extensive places in the

Plains of Abraham, where a monument marks the place of Wolfe's last battle, his victory and death, in 1759; also to the battle-field of Ste. Foye, where Prince Napoleon Bonaparte erected, in 1854, a monument in honor of the fruitless French victory of De Lévis over Murray in 1760. You pass also the massive



LONDON COFFEE-HOUSE INN.

English style lying along the edge of the bluffs overlooking the St. Lawrence or the St. Charles. In some of them, as Spencerwood, the official residence of the Governor of the Province of Quebec, you see good examples of landscape gardening.

On approaching the town you come to the

Martello towers, built in 1805,—and then are almost startled by coming upon the new Houses of Parliament and a few ornate modern houses, utterly out of keeping with the surroundings. At last you reach the walls of the city, which inclose it by following the edge of the cliffs all around the end of the ridge, and then crossing

the plains about a mile back of Cape Diamond. The old gates of the city have unfortunately been torn down, but new ones are building, and the walls are to be preserved and made into a boulevard encircling the Upper Town. The first fort at Quebec was built by Jacques Cartier on the banks of the St. Charles, in 1535; batteries, palisades, walls, and forts were built at various epochs after the founding of Quebec by Champlain, in 1608; and at last the present walls and citadel were begun under the sanction of the Duke of Wellington, in 1823. The citadel, with its cannon, its unique gate of chains, and its massive walls, is filled with a different sentiment from that of the cosy home region of Quebec; here you shrink from the glare, the silence, and the pall-like gloom that hover about the engines of death. We have almost completed our walk about the city, and now stand on the Durham Terrace, on the verge of the cliffs that rise above the

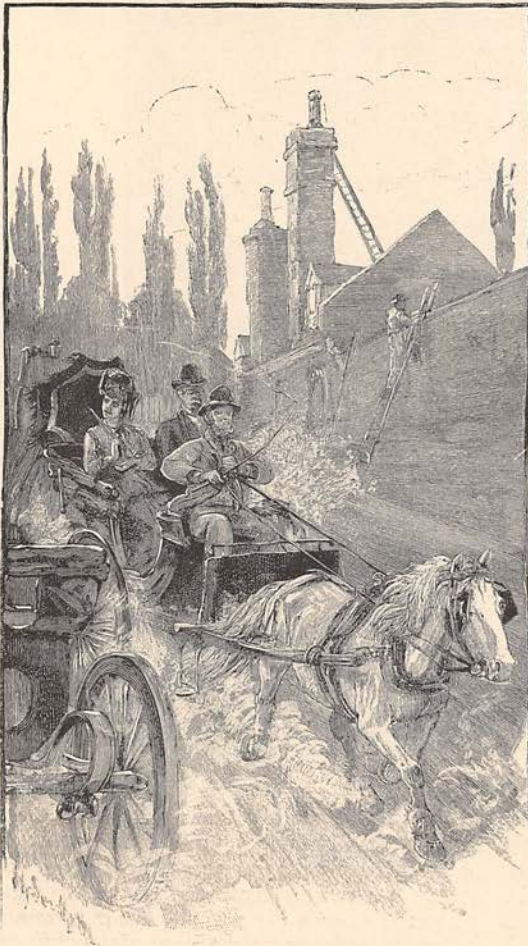
Lower Town. You may lean over the railing and look down the face of the crags into little winding streets, scarcely dividing the masses of extremely irregular roofs and chimneys, into back yards, here and there, with verandas along the rocks, or even into the dormer windows of garrets.

The surface of the plateau where the upper town stands is very rolling, sloping toward the St. Charles at many different angles. The narrow streets, with narrow sidewalks, wind about these slopes in the most erratic way, still following the paths of the Indians or the first settlers. To walk about Quebec is to turn the pages of a book full of pictures of the past. The view changes at each corner.

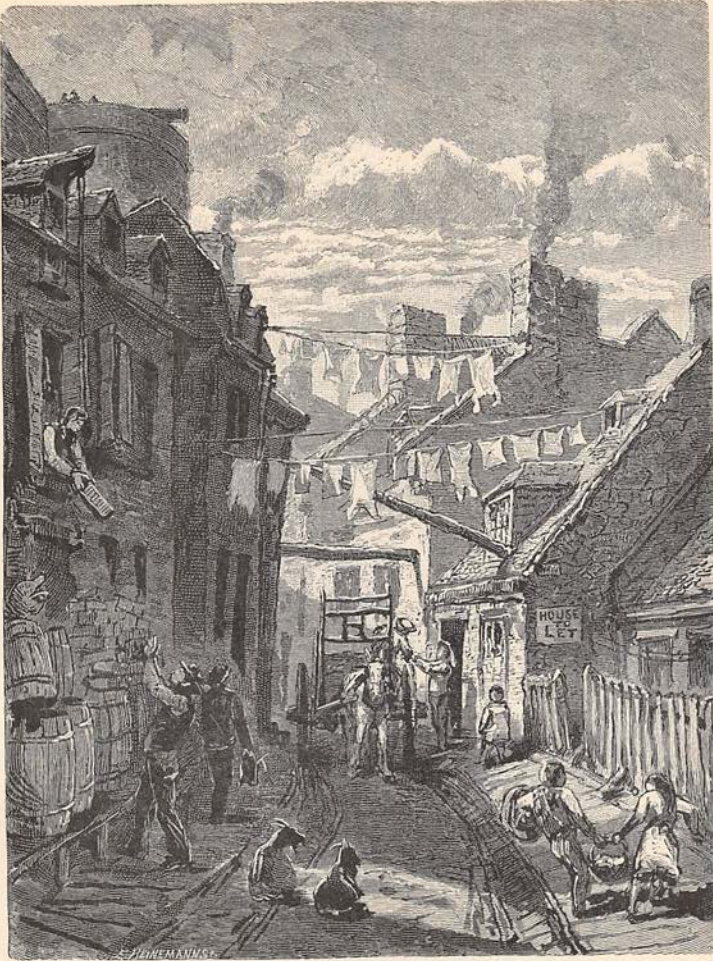
The cloisters of Quebec have always been its most important feature. They were indeed the heart of Canada; for the colonization of the country depended far more on the zeal of the priest than on the cupidity of the fur-trader. Quebec, under the French *régime*, was practically the capital of a theocracy. These institutions, among the very oldest on this continent, are still the chief power molding the character of the French-Canadian people; and they still preserve within their massive walls the life of the seventeenth century. With trifling exceptions they administer the educational and the charitable affairs of the city, and they indirectly, but not less efficiently, control the Government.

Tourists visit the convents of the Ursulines and the Hôtel-Dieu, dating from 1639, the Basilica or cathedral, 1647, the Seminary, 1663, the Naval University, the Libraries, and some other edifices, to see their paintings,—among others a Christ by Van Dyck,—their relics of heroes and martyrs, and their museums. Historians, however, will best enjoy these institutions, for their fancy will cover the walls with some of the most striking scenes known to history. The Jesuits' college, recently torn down, was especially venerable, in memories of the extraordinary labors and martyrdoms of the Jesuit missionaries over two hundred years ago. It was the seat of the most important power directing the destinies of the country. Yet it is only at this late day that the Canadians are collecting a national fund to build a chapel on the site of the college in honor of the Jesuit fathers, and to erect, at last, a monument to the memory of Champlain.

I spent a morning at the Ursuline Convent, talking through an iron grate with a nun. Another nun was kneeling behind the next grate and conversing in a low tone



A CALÈCHE.



UNDER CAPE DIAMOND.

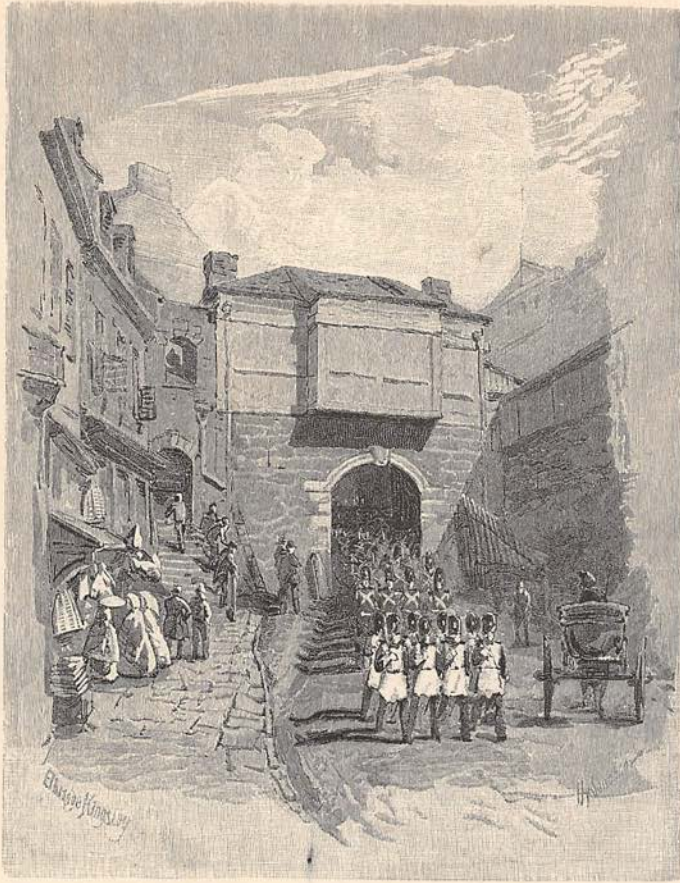
with a man who wept silently. The white walls and the bare floor seemed bleak and chill to the spirit; and the cell-like space behind the grates was in shadow and silence. The serenity of the cloister was to me like the peace of the grave. The man was a peasant lad, whose dark face was set in hopeless grief. The kneeling nun, barred from human touch, was a motionless figure, draped in austere robes of black and white falling in unbroken folds from her head, and showing only her pale face. Now and then a word floated to my ear, as the bare walls ceased to echo our own talk:

"She was so good," said he again with a despairing sob.

"Yes, but she is an angel now," she answered with a smile, and a voice almost calm. They were brother and sister, talking of their mother's death; he in thought of his desolated home, she in the serenity of the cloister.

When I left the austere and silent place and returned to the quiet old streets of stone, I scarcely felt a change of scene, for you continually meet with priests and nuns, who form a pleasant element in the city, for its whole aspect is in harmony with their courteous and simple bearing.

The grandest season at Quebec is mid-winter. Then the great northern wilderness advances from the horizon of mountains and blockades the town. But the people light their fires, and make the city a social nest under the snow. The mountains and the plains are a desert of snow, tufted with a forest-fur of bare trees, and the white villages seem to be buried. The St. Lawrence grinds up vast fields of ice, and the sound of its resistless force is the only sign of life in the deserted port, and down its vistas, of polar desolation. The town itself is a polar scene. The walls and glacis of the fortifications are



PRESCOTT GATE.

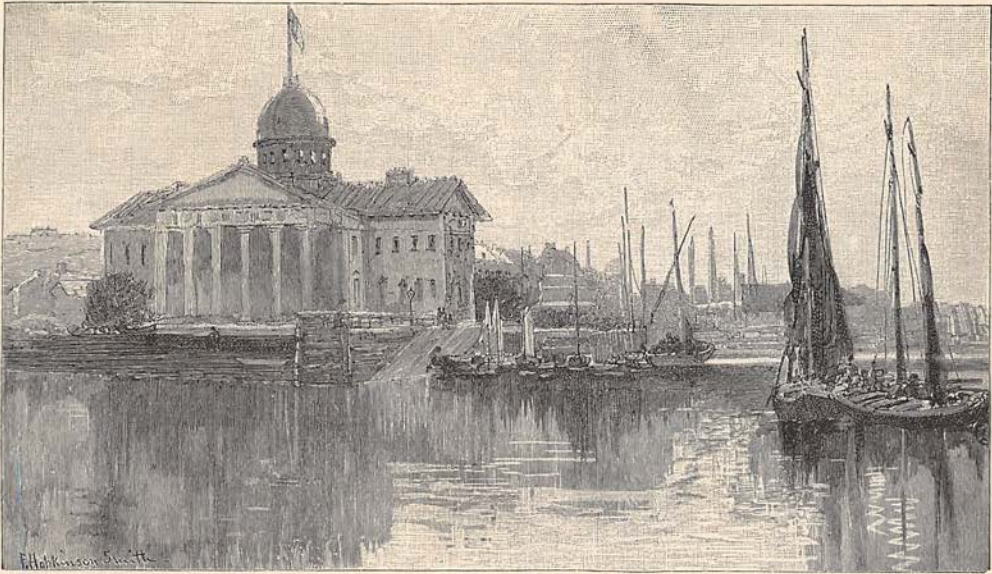
now great slopes of snow; the cliffs are bearded with enormous icicles; and the gables, dormers, and chimneys are almost all that look out of the great snow-drift covering the city. The street-life of Quebec, meanwhile, goes at its merriest pace. The market-place is thronged with country sleighs, with peasants that seem only masses of furs and wraps, and with city folk saluting their acquaintances and trading.

There are bearded, burly, fur-coated figures walking along the streets. Out on the glacié and the plains young people are snow-shoeing and tobogganing; picnics go to Montmorency Falls to slide on the cone of ice. Everybody seems cheerful and hearty.

Low sleighs, called "carrioles," are driving about the streets. Each is furnished with fur robes, under which the passengers nestle in comfort. Some of them, as those of the Tandem Club and many other private turnouts, are very elegant, with fine-blooded horses and with masses of rich, dark furs framing rosy faces.

There are also the baby sleighs, some with downy lamb's-wool and crowing cherubs; and others a simple soap-box, in which two babies and a molasses-jug are stowed with astonishing compactness. The public hack-horses take the least comfort, I fancy, though they are well blanketed. They are moved about the squares to suit the weather, getting shelter where they can and turning tail to the storms. The cabmen in winter are quite picturesque in their fur caps, and their long coats of coon, wolf, or buffalo skins, with a red sash tied about the waist.

A snowy twilight gives Quebec a still more striking aspect. The distance is hidden in the gray obscurity; gables, dormers, and chimneys loom out in single groups; and the view of picturesque, individual forms changes suddenly at every step. The place is muffled and veiled. People creep into their collars, bow their heads, or even turn their backs to the wind to get breath, as they hurry on to shelter, and life seems in risk from the fury

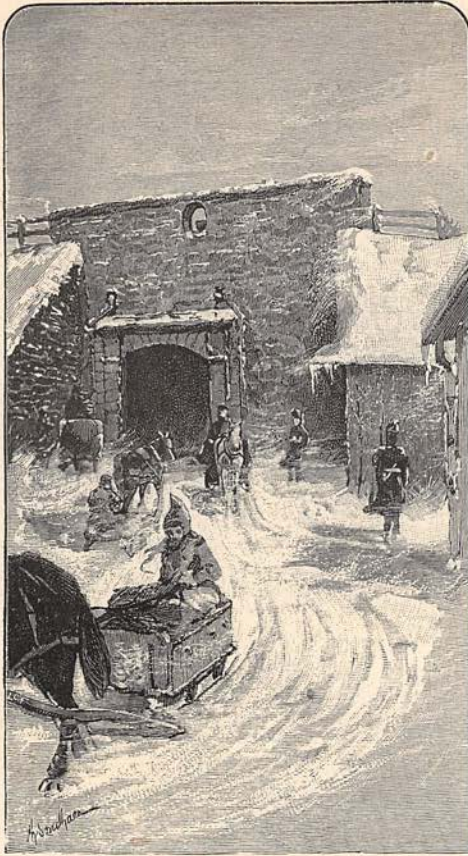


THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.

of the elements even here in the sheltered streets. When you come out on the verge of the cliffs the citadel looms still farther above you, erect amid all the unchecked storms of heaven, and every brow shakes a hoary streamer of snow out into the night. As you



NEW ST. JOHN'S GATE.



OLD ST. JOHN'S GATE.

go on, you pass close to the high walls of a cloister overtopped by snow-drifts, beside cannon pointing above the confusion of

roofs at the foot of the crag, and into the impenetrable veil of the storm. The gloom of the great northern wilderness bears down into your very soul, but the dormer windows over the wall of the cloister light up as friendly eyes, the Angelus sounds from the chapel of the nuns, and you feel again that you are near to the beating heart of the old city. Then let the clouds pass and the moonlight come, and the scene becomes enchanted. The street is as silent as a polar sea; its broken, jagged lines of gables, dormers, and chimneys, in alternate light and shadow, rise against a sky of dark blue; wherever the moonbeams touch the roofs, icicles and snow crystals gleam out in response. But, as the white earth reflects the light, the air itself seems luminous, and you see everything below the sky-line as if in a dream.

The bells of a sleigh sound for a moment from the busier thoroughfare into your retired lane; and now and then a muffled figure crosses in the distance; the creaking of steps on the snow dies away, and all relapses into an unbroken silence. On Christmas-eve you would find the same scene of rare and delicate beauty, only that on that sacred night the city heart would be all aglow—though little would escape through doors and windows into the silent streets. Now and then the strains of some ancient Christmas carols would sound faintly through the double sashes, as from some under-world, preludeing the midnight music when the chimes break out, and the still air beats with the world's emotion. You look up, and the old city on the crags seems to lie close to the glory of the midnight sky.

Charles H. Farnham.

THE MINSTREL AT CASTLE GARDEN.

HARK, whence come those strange vibrations, whence that haunting monotone,
Like a mournful voice in darkness, crooning softly and alone,
Breathing melancholy whispers that might move a heart of stone?

What lone soul, surcharged with sorrow, voices here its weird lament,—
Here where Europe's eager exiles, still with hope and strength unspent,
Throng beneath the wide-flung portals of this mighty continent?

Hark! methinks that in the music of that gently murmured strain
I detect a Norseland cadence trembling through its sad refrain,—
Something wild and vague, awaking strange responses in my brain.

Ah, behold! there sits the minstrel high above the surging throng,
On a heap of chests and boxes, playing dreamily along,
Luring back his vanished Norseland by the tone's enchantment, strong!

Well I know those guileless features, mirroring the childlike soul,
And those patient eyes and placid, that disguise nor joy nor dole,
And the sturdy, rough-hewn figure, rugged like a fir-tree's bole.