

THE URSULINES OF QUEBEC.*

FROM her cape of primeval rock with the sunrise on her face, Quebec sees to the left and rear the fertile plain of the St. Charles, to the right the majestic river, and at her feet the estuary of the lower St. Lawrence, embracing, as with arms of a sea, the picturesque Island of Orleans. What is she doing there to-day, clustered about and over that promontory of gray rock, sweeping with her guns a highway of North America, offering in her roadstead shelter to all the fleets in the world, camped as mistress at the pass of the great river of the North? Has she chosen the glorious eyrie that she may control the traffic and travel of the North-west, form a center commercial, educational, intellectual, from which the fruitful ideas and smart contrivances of modern civilization shall radiate, and to which in turn the best material in men and minds to be found in the surrounding provinces shall flow?

No: Quebec stands there as a guard of honor, an appanage of three great foundations, three faithful servants, of the holy Catholic Church. The city huddles in respectful inferiority around three great foundations: the University of Laval, the Ursuline Convent, and the Basilica. The university takes the lead in instructing the male youth of the province; the Ursuline Convent teaches the girls; and to all the Basilica offers the services of the Church, invested with the pomp that befits a coveted title, a pomp superintended by an ecclesiastic no less august than a cardinal. It is true that the Protestant and English elements have tried to stem the dominating French Catholicism by erecting a great church called a cathedral; but the handsome and respectable structure only adds to the dignity of Quebec without altering the social situation. The city is Catholic and French to the core; and not only French, but feudal. Unlike other American towns north of Texas, there is nothing hastily conceived within its old area, no signs of having overshot the mark. It seems as slow and legitimate a growth from the surrounding country as the towns of Europe. If the breath of mediæval France exhales from its every part,—from the steep

streets ending with a vista of an embrasure for cannon, the wonderful house-tops, plain and severe, yet grouped in picturesque slopes and angles, the soaring church towers and ramparts, pointed at intervals with the Lombardy poplar,—not less is the surrounding country France of the latest Middle Ages. The whitewashed, brown-roofed, small-paned farm-houses, with gables that curve in graceful lines never seen in the United States; the regular lay of separate properties, the frequent small lime-kilns, the stone-work used in preference to wood, the quadrangles formed by stables and outhouses with the farmer's cottage—all these would recall France, were not the people there to show in walk and gesture, as well as language, the existence of a race alien, if not antagonistic, to the Anglo-Saxon. Drive past these farm-houses for several leagues. Presently they thicken, a few small shops appear, and there, blazoned at a distance by the flashing zinc tiles of its double steeple, stands a parish church large enough for a basilica! How could these handfuls of farmers, the traveler asks himself, build such costly houses of worship? For this district is not an exception. All down the lower St. Lawrence, each in its village or hamlet, such churches rear their haughty crests. Here and there one sees a priest in black robes, and on his head the local badge of superiority to the common herd—a high silk hat. The French-Canadian farmers and petty traders are thrifty and frugal, but stingy to a proverb. How could they erect and keep in beautiful order the legion of churches that make more picturesque a handsome land? Could it have been through a miracle, think you?

Ah, if the reader scoffs, one may know what to think of him. He is a heretic. Just such miracles have happened, and not once, but thrice, and, moreover, in Quebec. On such a point, what authority is better than a publication of the sisterhood of Ursulines, due to the talents and piety of one whose conventual humility forbids her to put even a religious name on the title-page? At page 75 of "Les Ursulines de Québec," read of the miracle that happened between the year 1640, when the monastery was undertaken, and the year

* "Les Ursulines de Québec. Depuis leur Établissement jusqu'à nos Jours." Tome Premier. Québec: C. Daveau, 1878.

"Une Colonie Féodale en Amérique." Par M. Rameau, Paris.

"The Jesuits in North America." By Francis Parkman. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

"A Chance Acquaintance." By W. D. Howells. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

1651, when an account was given of the sums received from France to pay for its erection. These were credited to the names of the benefactors on the books of the convent, and amounted in all to twenty-five thousand three hundred and thirty-two livres. Now, the building cost fifty thousand livres; whence came the moiety against which appears no name of a French benefactor? A heretic will mumble something would-be facetious about the arithmetic of women. One who is worthy to read the charming records of these doves of the nunnery will bow his head and place opposite the unclaimed donation the name of God. "*Comment fut donc bâti et payé ce monastère?*" asks the devotee whose graceful pen gives life and color to those driest of dry bones, the annals of a corporation. "Did God multiply the offerings of charity in the hands of the venerable Mother of the Incarnation (Marie Guyart), just as it is notorious that he did later, during the rebuilding? We are quite ready to believe it. There was a benediction accorded to the generosity and disinterestedness of the benefactors, as well as to the invincible confidence in the adorable providence of that servant of God."

Those who have a faith less fervent than the eulogist of Mother Marie Guyart may argue for themselves the interposition of the divine finger by other methods. They will not even be moved by hearing that the chapel contains a morsel of the true cross, about four lines long, or other relics less holy, such as a skull of one of the eleven thousand virgins of St. Ursula who refused to submit to the embraces of heathen soldiers. But was not Heaven at work helping to shed over so plain a structure the oil of beauty; or is it merely that the simple and beneficent lives of the sweet sisterhood, jealously hidden behind walls, gratings, and lattices, will bloom out somewhere, and at last show their influence? True, an architect may sneer at that chapel. It is well that Viollet-le-Duc died without crushing it under the weight of his mediæval learning. But in its plainness, in the slightly tinted walls and darker chocolate edgings, in the old French paintings which hang within, somewhat saccharine of color and tawdry in their eighteenth-century sentiment,—in the rococo altar and the brown spaces of the great lattices behind which the nuns kneel, there is a sweetness, there is a charm, that cannot well make its way into speech, much less into the formality of print. Let the visitor of Quebec consider for a moment the fantastic and yet singularly sober eccentricities of the iron-work on the gratings to the sacristy, and he will understand.

If Quebec is a resultant of the feudalism

of France from within its walls, added to the terror of heretics and savages from without, the Ursuline Convent has not been exempt from the dangers that befell the city. In 1660 it stood on the edge of gardens and fields, where the Iroquois would be sure to strike first in their threatened descents upon the capital. During that summer, imagine the prayers and lessons of the nuns broken upon by a small band of excited citizens, who hurry in to change the convent into a fort. The sisters and their resident pupils are drafted off to the college of the Jesuits; loop-holes are cut in the walls; entrances are barricaded; bridges thrown between separate parts of the general edifice; a few of the *saintes mères* stay to provide food for the garrison. What troubles them most is that, in view of the exposed position of the convent, it has been necessary to remove the Holy Sacrament to a safer place. The sisters mourn its absence as other women might the departure of a lover—such is the sensuous mysticism of their lives. Men and women had good reason for their fears, since the valiant and well-organized redmen tortured and devoured the male captives, and subjected female prisoners to the basest, most cruel indignities. If Mr. Parkman, in reaction against the sentimental view of the Indian, has not done the Five Nations entire justice in respect to the grade of their civilization, he has given due prominence to their warlike qualities and their fierceness.

It is not without good reason that Quebec groups itself about the Ursuline Convent. Among the first to share the privations of an advanced colony too often forgot by the mother-country, it grew with its growth, suffered the hardships of its famines, and the plundering of the Tweeds of the time. It kept up the failing spirits of the townsmen when repeated disasters made them talk of abandoning the New World altogether. It stands like the oldest inhabitant of the city, or like the representative of one of the oldest families in a community that reverences good birth. But it did more. According to their light and their time, the sisters performed the service for which they set out, namely, to instruct the French and savage girls in the rudiments of education. Great stress, to be sure, was laid upon purely religious teaching. Much time was wasted by beginning at the wrong end. Instead of putting their strength upon the material civilization of the Indians, the sisters were happy when they had given the crude and child-like natives a thin varnish of Christianity, which the slightest strain cracked. Many are the naïve expressions of delight recorded in their letters to France at the precocity of certain little Huron girls, who, with the imitiveness

both of children and savages, copied the acts and speeches of their elders in a really startling fashion. But the task before the sisters was beyond their powers. If false methods of education are in question, what nation, what sect of Christians, what religion is warranted to cast the stone? The Ursulines taught the young French girls when no one else could. That to this day they teach them in some respects not amiss may be conjectured from the demeanor of the pretty brown Canadian-French girls whom one sees in Quebec and the surrounding places. How modestly and sweetly they trip along on their business! Seldom does one have to encounter the unabashed stare or hear the impertinent laugh that come from young people, equally pretty and doubtless quite as moral, in towns of the United States. Never does one see the *blasé*, cynical look which, in Paris, stamps even the young girls.

Yet the Ursuline Convent is no longer a conspicuous object on the plateau of the old town. Dwellings and public buildings have nestled in and around. Who first said that Quebec had a whole Catholic martyrology registered in her streets? The phrase might date from the end of the seventh century. Turning from the comparatively long and straight thoroughfare of St. Louis into a little passage called Parloir, we are already at the doors of the convent; we are almost at the parlor of the sisters. Linger about the Parloir, or the yard in front of a large building with curious tin-tiles upon its roof. The pretty chapel is on your right. Suddenly in front of you a door may open and pour forth a mass of little girls. Thérèse, Léonie, Sidonie, Ernestine—these are the names they may be calling, while they confide to each other secrets of huge importance. As they rush out, you catch a glimpse of two or more lovely faces surrounded by the white linen head-dress of the Ursulines. But your profane, secular stare has been observed. There is no woman in the world less self-conscious than a nun. A glimpse is all you can get, for, while the doors are being hastily pushed to, the nuns hurry away into the building, the little brown-eyed girls scamper off into the old silent town, and you are left alone. You have seen the modern representatives of those women who subdued the horror of the sea and of exile natural to their race and sex, and who found it in their conscience to leave the land of their parents and the endearments of their cloistered friends, to meet with hardships certainly, and possibly with violent death, in a zone where the winter was even more savage than the savages themselves.

Great stir, in truth, did their pilgrimage

make in France. There was the young widow Madame de la Peltrie, whose life and character have been admirably drawn by Parkman. About her fame scandal has been busy, as usual, but this much is sure: she devoted her life and fortune to the cause of education. There was Marie Guyart, the Ursuline, who, independent of her, had come to the same conclusions as her lay sister, and could instance visions which plainly announced that she had been appointed to convert the North American heathen. As the Virgin is especially loved by many of the monks in cloister, so a male saint is appropriate to visionary women. Why is St. Joseph so popular in the streets and neighborhood of Quebec, as well as in the hearts of Quebecois? Not merely because he was made patron saint of Canada by the Franciscans in 1624, but because he directed the Ursulines to settle in Canada. To St. Joseph the vow of Madame de la Peltrie was made when devising means to carry out her plan. But would the reader appreciate the zeal that was needed to break away from home entanglements, and establish the order in America, let him catch the wind of it by glancing at a prayer recorded as that of Maria Guyart—her whom Bossuet called the Theresa of the New World, and for whom Fénelon wrote a panegyric:

“It is through the Heart of my Jesus, my path, my truth and life, that I approach you, O eternal Father. Through that divine Heart, I adore you on the part of those who adore you not; I love you on the part of those who love you not; I recognize you on the part of all the voluntary blind ones, who, through disdain, recognize you not. Through that divine Heart I long to perform the duty required from all mortal beings. In spirit I make the tour of the world in order to seek all the souls bought by the very precious blood of my divine Spouse, in order to satisfy you for them all by way of that divine Heart; I kiss them and present them to you by his aid, and by his aid I ask for their conversion. Alas, eternal Father, and will you permit them to ignore my Jesus and allow that they shall not live for him who died for us all? You see, O divine Father, that they are not yet alive. Oh, cause them to live by means of that divine Heart!

“Upon that adorable Heart I present to you all the workers for the Evangels, in order that you fill them with your Holy Spirit, by means of his merits. Upon that sacred Heart, as upon a divine altar, I present to you in particular, N, or M,” etc.

Following in the footsteps of the martyr-missionaries, and repeating more nearly the experiences of Madame de Champlain, these two visionaries set out in 1639. Feasted and run after by the court in Paris, at Dieppe their departure was made a spectacle to edify the mind and move the heart of France. The passage was long and rough. Delayed by fogs, reduced by sickness and tempests, nearly destroyed by an iceberg, the impulse of the little company of priests and nuns, when they

first reached land, was to crowd into the small boat and desert at once their narrow quarters. Many thus came near drowning close to their destination. The Governor and inhabitants of Quebec received them all with demonstrations; but the Ursulines were forced to live in a small cabin in the lower city. In fact the upper city did not then exist. Despite their close quarters and the rigor of the winter, they set about teaching the French and heathen girls. In 1642 their first monastery was complete on the plateau where its successor now stands. The financial miracle already noticed as having taken place at the building of the first attended the erection of a new convent in 1652. On a bitter December night of 1650, almost at the opening of the new year, the first structure took fire and was quickly burned to the ground. Clad in nothing but their night-dresses, the poor women, who had been used to keep their faces concealed as much as possible, were forced to brave the polar night and the gaze of all the little settlement which hurried to their rescue. By good luck many had their shoes on when they woke, because the cold was so intense that they had slept in them to escape frost-bite. Fire destroyed this building also in 1686, but again it rose, stronger and larger than ever. On both occasions the pious virgins attribute their safety and rehabilitation to the interposition of Mary, and in one case there is testimony to her actual presence, superintending the raising of the walls. It is strange that such keen eyes to detect the miraculous, and such healthy, indiscriminate appetites for signs, portents, and weirds, should have overlooked an evident forewarning of the life-work in North America which was in store for the Ursulines and for the lay founder of their chapter in Quebec. Has any sister yet marked the fact that Ursula means "little bear," and plainly foretold what her name would accomplish for the land of bears and Indians?—and yet this other, that Madame de la Peltrie, also bore in her name an evident reference to the chief articles of export which gave secular value to the French possessions in Canada!

Not without good reason does Quebec bear outward traces of a town of the feudal ages, for in its houses and environs still linger representatives of old fiefs accorded by the King of France. The late researches into documents belonging to the French Government, in the seventeenth century, prove still more completely than the statements of old travelers that the first settlers of Canada were members from the best classes of the French commonwealth. The land was occupied, not by the highest nobility, nor by adventurers and malefactors, as the Old World enemies

of the New World, in more than one language, have at times maintained, but by the upper bourgeois class and lower ranks of the nobility. M. Rameau shows how the desire for social rank, which could be gratified at that time only by the possession of estates, operated alike on the rich merchant classes of French towns and on the poorer members of the aristocracy. It had enough force to send them over the sea, where new titles could be gained with new domains, and where younger scions of houses already great at home could establish collateral lines on the feudal basis of landed estates. These men of mark brought with them or imported their own farmers and workmen. This is true not only of Canada, but, under varying conditions, of Virginia, New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania. The religious establishments in Canada adhered even more scrupulously to feudal systems than did the laymen. In 1665, Quebec was galvanized into fresh life by the arrival of De Tracy with a fleet full of gayly clad soldiers. The celebrated Régiment Carignan then made its first appearance, and for the first time the Iroquois saw horses. This regiment was made up of nobles, and lands having been granted by the King, it gave origin to the proudest families of Quebec. For these patentees did not, like too many of the well-born or well-bred residents of Canada, whether they came as governors, patentees, warriors, or tradesmen, make haste to leave the country that gave them wealth and additional rank. As a rule, they did not desert Canada and leave the poorer classes without their natural superiors and leaders. But now times are changed. Even these patentees have dwindled away to a small, scattered company. Not so with the Church. Proverbial for her conservatism, the Church never lets go what she has seized. The Ursulines are still true to the age of their foundation, if, indeed, they do not go yet farther back to a time supposed to be more godly because more remote. They hold much property by old fiefs, and acknowledge the suzerainty of their superiors in the Church. But it is not in temporal matters alone that they retain the sentiment and forms of feudalism. Their spiritual sovereign is the Virgin. On a certain day, once every three years, they tender her formal act of vassalage.

The first occasion on which the ceremony took place was the 8th of September, 1650. On that day the bells of the convent toll, and the nuns, surrounded by their pupils, both French and Indian, betake themselves to the chapel. The monastery is at last complete, thanks to the ever-present help of the Virgin. The inhabitants of the town have

made a procession in her honor, and now the Mother Superior on earth is about to yield up her authority to a Mother Superior in heaven with some of the solemnities practiced in by-gone centuries toward potentates. The nuns are about to acknowledge themselves the "little subjects and most humble hand-maidens" of the Virgin. The statue of the Virgin is brilliant with lights and surrounded with flowers. Incense arises in a cloud, and the finest voice of the convent intones the invocation "Memorare." When that ends, the Mother Superior kneels before the image and solemnly deposits the keys of the monastery at its feet. Then begins her prayer on behalf of the whole convent for pardon of faults, concluding with a formal abdication of her position as Superior and the recognition of the Virgin as Lady and Advocate, first and principal Superior. The "Te Deum" is then chanted, while one nun after another approaches to render homage to the statue by kissing its feet.

Yet the Ursuline order had been in existence hardly one hundred years when the chapter was founded at Quebec. St. Angela of Merici and twelve comrades started the order in 1535, and presently it spread to France. The Ursulines of Quebec have coalesced with another convent of hospital sisters and conformed to the regulations of the Ursulines of Paris.

Since one of the main aims of the Ursulines was the civilization of the Indian women, what was their success? True, the records contain many instances of Huron and Algonquin girls who had been *francisées*, but bitter also were the complaints of the reaction to forest life. "A Frenchman becomes a savage easier than a savage becomes French," wrote the Mother of the Incarnation—a fact of which Robert Cavelier (de la Salle) had sad experience in his voyage on the Mississippi. "Savage life is so charming by reason of its freedom, that it is a miracle when one persuades them to act like French people. They regard such life unworthy of them, making it a glory never to work except while on the hunt, or while in boats, or while at war. The children learn this as if at their birth. Women and girls paddle their canoes like the men." But in this very sentence we see how unjust it is to form conclusions about savage tribes from the fixed ideas of our own bringing up. The women were at work when they paddled. Certainly no women work harder than Indian squaws; and it is a suspicious fact that the Indian girls should have been so ready to desert the comforts of the nunnery for inevitable hard work, privations, and blows in the wigwam. Was not the system of the Ursulines

at fault? In 1668 orders came from France to "Frenchify" the Indians, and both priests and nuns attempted the task on a larger scale. The same high authority writes of the girls: "Hardly one in a hundred have we Frenchified." As to the boys, all ran away from the school of the missionaries save one.

And yet Frenchmen could manage the Indians as men of no other nationality could. No other nation has been so successful in binding to themselves races of inferior civilization. Nevertheless, the French have little reputation as colonizers compared to the Dutch and English, whose conduct to the lower races has been almost uniformly brutal and selfish. In truth, the French are too good civilizers. They readily merge into a subject race, because they are too facile in adapting themselves to novel customs. In India as well as North America, the French were the path-finders, the explorers of the land, whose solid benefits were reaped by the after-coming Englishman. Where the Anglo-Saxon and Frenchman were together in presence of the savages, the latter preferred to intermarry with the wild women rather than submit to the undervaluation of the physically but not mentally superior Anglo-Saxon. The savage looked up to the Frenchman as a superior being; the ignorant Anglo-Saxon looked down on him as belonging to a nation inferior in physique.

From the naïve records of the nuns it is plain enough to see that they had small chance to manage the Indians with lasting success. Neither they nor the Jesuits, in whose footsteps they tried to walk, cared to improve the material well-being of the savages more than just enough to prevent a summary desertion. They fed and clothed them in order to form their immature minds into a species of vessel wherein to pour the mystic phraseology of the Church. If the poor innocents repeated the formulas with only a moderate show of understanding—if, moreover, they feasted and fasted in due order, and observed the hours of prayer, the nuns were overwhelmed with delight. One day a missionary visits a class of Indian pupils, and asks them if they are happy in the convent, and if they wish to stay long. At this the little girls assume a grave and mysterious air, and, pressing up close to him, as if to impart a dreadful secret, they say: "Father, you see how old and worn our clothes are; we are not given new ones; we are not smart-looking like the French girls, and that makes us unhappy." When this is reported to the Mother Superior, she hastens to make them dresses and mittens of red cloth, and provides them with new stockings and shoes—"for fear that these little

creatures should not receive with pleasure into their hearts the seed of faith." The ill success of the Ursulines in really civilizing the Indians went hand in hand with a similar failure on the part of the Jesuits, and earned for both the enmity of the great Frontenac, whose godlessness in witnessing a representation of "Tartuffe" in Quebec is still remembered by the good Ursulines with unabated horror. For, while French military men and traders civilized to a certain extent the Indians with whom they came in contact, and, in spite of fire-water, did so effectually without special effort, the missionaries and nuns, who came for that very purpose, reaped comparatively small results.

In France, and from the very first, too, the Ursulines had their persistent detractors. Madame de la Peltrie had to win a tedious lawsuit with her nearest heirs, and marry an old gentleman as a dummy husband, before she could alienate her property to the support of the Canadian schemes. The Mother Superior complained that people said the Ursulines did no good, when, in fact, what went on inside the convent could not be seen, as could the work of the hospital nuns. She pleads that silence in the reports to France should not be construed as want of diligence. It appears that the famous "Relations," mainstay of the historian of early Canada, which kept Europe posted on the struggles of the missions, fell into the hands of an editor who cut off the voluminous annals of the Ursulines. It was doubtless with good reason. Compared to the tragedies that were being enacted among the Jesuits, the simple reports of clever sayings of little Huron girls, of singular events which the fervor of the good nuns dilated into miracles, must have been dull to the most devout of the courtiers of Louis XIV. The memory of De Tracy is green among the Ursulines because he lent the full weight of his personal authority, and that of a subduer of the heathen Iroquois, to deny the accusations brought against the nuns in France—accusations some of which had origin in quarrels about real estate. The Jesuits, on the other hand, were in bad odor with the merchants, because they traded more or less in furs in order to keep their missions self-supporting. Another grievance of the laity was the despotic character of the Canadian church. Farmers took to the woods and savage life rather than suffer spoliation by the religious orders. In 1663, the clergy exacted a thirteenth part of all agricultural produce; it was reduced to a twenty-sixth in 1669. Isidore Le Brun points out the disadvantage under which the Catholic farmers labored in

the struggle for existence, when comparison was made between them and their Protestant neighbors of English or American origin. Things are possibly better in Lower Canada now than they were in 1831, when he wrote, but the fact that hundreds of French Canadians have settled in New England every year since the Civil War cannot be explained merely upon the plea that the Yankee manufacturers attract them by good pay. Thousands of French Canadians come into New England to work for a season, and then return; but an ever-increasing proportion of them lease or buy New England farms, and settle as families.

Religious bodies produce a tendency of capital toward them, owing to the prudent management of the community at the earlier stages, and, afterward, through bequests and the inherent multiplication of funds. So the religious bodies of Quebec have everything to do with its present state of antiquity, and can point to their early settlement of the place as justification for their practical monopoly of the town. Having occupied the land with a grasp that even conquest could with difficulty loosen, they restrained the town from the commercial development which would naturally follow its central position. The law still goes hand in hand with religion, as it did in France at the time of Rabelais. It is a sight of Quebec, that little quarter of the advocates closely adjoining the Ursulines and built upon their land! In queer, small, long-roofed stone houses sit the *chats fourrés* of Rabelais, stripped, it is true, of their ermine and their portentous mien, but furnished still with a goodly complement of claws. The scratching of their quills inside the dark little offices is easily heard on the narrow sidewalk, so quiet is the old city. It is here that the Church finds clever lawyers, with wits filed sharp on the old French law that was swept away in France by Napoleon in favor of his code—lawyers who are able to plead in English, modern and mediæval French, and *patois* French as well. They are small, dark men, very plainly dressed, who exhale from their shabby clothes an odor of parchment. If you are so lucky as to see an awkward peasant standing in one of the little dens, fingering his hat, and muttering an impossible language which he himself will tell you is not French, the sphinx-like advocate meanwhile scribbling immovably at his desk, you have struck a chord of three centuries ago.

Capital is ever arrogant. Judge what must have been the arrogance of those who had not only large capital, but a power within and independent of the Government, such as the Government would gladly have been able to

wild. In the seventeenth century the colony was practically enslaved by the Church. People could not go to the play, nor even stay away from mass, with impunity. In the present century, the policy of the Church is to bend to the storm and exercise her influence in concealment. We are wont to regard the Indians of Canada as in far better circumstances than our own much-abused and expensive red men. Yet Indians of Canada who have managed to secure an unbiased education tell a different tale. At the Iroquois village of Caughnawaga, opposite Lachine, there are Indians who have lost every foot of land by the encroachment of whites.

A protracted lawsuit between the shepherd and his flock, such as has existed between St. Sulpice and the Indians, puts the touchstone to the system pursued by Jesuits and Ursulines. Two centuries ago, in a new and heathen land, their work may have been effectual. But the world passed that stage while French Canada was fast asleep, lulled by the torpid air of a by-gone age, self-centered by the domination of the English, sealed hermetically from the freshness of the nineteenth century by the arts of the Church. Why should the Ursulines know how to teach? Do they take their vows because they feel themselves especially adapted to instruct young girls? There is no health in a system of education controlled by men or women, however ascetic may be their lives, however brilliant may be the attainments of the exceptional among them,

who look, not to the desires and ambitions of their charges, but to the carrying out of a policy dictated in a distant land.

A certain number of persons will always exist to whom convents afford relief from mental excitement or stress. There are always people being born who have the tastes and prejudices of three centuries ago. Any person with a large acquaintance knows of them. It may be that the Ursulines of Quebec will last on for the benefit of just such characters. And to lose them would be a pity, for at the same time would not the old town lapse entirely into commonplace? Instead of the old ramparted spot, we should have a large, showy, bustling city, such as Montreal is fast becoming. Perhaps it is fatally inevitable; perhaps the change has already set in; for certain grand new buildings outside the upper gates have an air of flash simplicity seen in the architecture of the late French Empire. It was to stem this that Lord Dufferin, with his sympathy for a remnant of later mediæval France, advised a renewal on a larger scale of the five gates of the old city. Change in the direction of greater comfort had to come; the danger was that the alterations would deprive Quebec of the last trace of individuality.

As the sun sets up the valley of the St. Charles, we hear chimes behind our back; they are the vesper bells of the convent. In protest against an age that denies their outworn creed, the saintly Ursulines are turning to their prayers.

Charles de Kay.

"A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE."

By the Author of "Marse Chan," "Meh Lady," etc.

IT was his greatest pride in life that he had been a soldier of the empire. He was known simply as "The Soldier," and it is probable there was not a man, and certain that there was not a child in the Quarter who did not know the tall, erect old Sergeant with his white, carefully waxed mustache, and his face seamed with two saber cuts, one of which all knew had been received the summer day when he had stood, a mere boy, in the hollow square at Waterloo striving to stay the fierce flood of Picton's cavalry; the other, tradition said, was of even more ancient date.

Yes, they all knew him, and knew how when he was not over thirteen, just the age of little Raoul the humpback, who was not as tall as Pauline, he had received the cross which he always wore over his heart, sewed in the breast of his coat, from the hand of the emperor himself, for standing on the hill at Wagram when his regiment broke, and beating the long-roll, while he held the tattered colors

resting in his arm, until the men rallied and swept back the left wing of the enemy. This the children knew, as their fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers before them had known it, and rarely an evening passed that some of the gamins were not to be found in the old man's kitchen, which was also his parlor, or else on his little porch, listening with ever-new delight to the story of his battles and of the emperor. They all knew as well as he the thrilling part where the emperor dashed by (the old Sergeant always rose reverently at the name, and the little audience also stood,—one or two nervous younger ones sometimes bobbing up a little ahead of time, but sitting down again in confusion under the contemptuous scowls and pluckings of the rest),—where the emperor dashed by, and reined up to ask an officer what regiment that was that had broken, and who was that drummer that had been promoted to ensign;— they all knew how, on the