

Old Joe Gravis

Sketch of the remarkable life of a humble Frenchman, by J. E. FAIRBURN, P.M., Bowmanville, Ont.

He was born in Alsace, France, in a township among the mountains, very near the German boundary, for he has often told me that they spent their long winter evenings in making torches of fat pine, which they sold in the German villages, that lay adjacent to them. It struck me as peculiar, why he had such an intense hatred of the Germans; he did not like them, their habits, or their language. If the same feeling prevails among the peasantry of Alsace now, as did when Joe was a boy, it will be a long time before they become Germanized. His father was a farmer. This does not convey to our minds what farming meant in that country. A man owning and working ten acres of land, was looked upon as a large farmer, while a man owning from two to five acres, was also looked upon, as quite a respectable proprietor. Joe's father owned two acres, every inch of which was cultivated by hand labor, and brought up to the highest condition of fertility.

Their main dependence for money was from the product of their cows, cheese being a principal article of commerce among them, consequently great attention was paid to their stock.

Their house was a long, one-storied stone structure, solidly built, so as to protect them from the intense cold in winter, and heat in summer; as the mountain district in which they lived was in a very high altitude. One half of the building was used as a stable for their cows. This seems strange to us in Canada, but no people could be more scrupulously clean, and as much attention was paid to the care of their stock as to themselves.

The circumstances surrounding these people caused them to exercise the greatest frugality, not a scrap of anything was allowed to go to waste but everything was utilized for some purpose, nearly all their clothing was home-made, coarse and strong.

The people themselves were large and robust, healthy and vigorous. Joe himself stood about six feet, and was a very strong man. He was well educated in his own language, and in English which he learned to read the English will, and speak it fluently. He was a Roman Catholic, but very liberal in his views; he knew the Bible well, and told me they were all taught to read it in the vernacular. He would refer with great feeling to his first communion, and speak of it, as the one great event in the lives of the young people in that part of France. The priest would spend a great deal of time in preparing the candidates for this solemn sacrament of the church, and judging from the influence it had on Joe's after life, lasting impressions must have been made on their minds, as to eternal things.

Joe was honest and upright, strictly truthful, and trustworthy, and with all the vivacity of a Frenchman, yet realized fully the responsibility of this life and the issues of the future one. Notwithstanding all the doctrinal differences, that exist between us protestants and catholics, I think, judging from what he said to me, in speaking of his own experience, that the rural population of old France, at the time he was a tender care of the church, and where the priest himself was a good man, he became to them a true spiritual guide, an authority on everything affecting their temporal interests, in all questions of doubt and difficulty, and his opinion would settle the matter. It was unknown. In Joe's opinion, the confessional was the restraining power against all kinds of secret sins, because as good catholics they had to confide to the priest their inner lives. When a young man, and before the fall of Bonaparte, he enlisted in the cavalry service, and was stationed, with his troop at Nancy, the chief town of the district, and here the romance of his life began. He was in the habit of going to a certain wine shop in the city, and spending his evenings there when off duty, the proprietress of which was a young widow. Joe became greatly enamoured with her, and after a short courtship, they were married. He was not long in discovering she had contracted a desire for stimulants, and this grew so rapidly upon her, she soon became a confirmed inebriate. He fought on with the situation as best he could for some little time, but eventually a tragedy occurred, which put an end to all domestic happiness. They had one child at the time, a little girl, and the mother had been in the habit of putting the cradle on the table, and in spite of Joe's remonstrance, who realized the danger, she persisted, and the result was that one day the predicted accident occurred, and the child was killed. Joe was passionately fond of children and this sad event brought about a change in his ideas of the future.

The episode was the one first dark blot in what afterwards proved to be, in his lot, a sky of gloom and misfortune. Oh, wine, how many crimes can be laid to thy charge, how many broken hearts, and shattered lives art thou responsible for? But what was to be done? He had a cousin who emigrated to Canada, and finally settled at Cobourg; with him he opened a correspondence, and he learned the position of affairs, and asked his advice. Now this is one part of the narrative that to me is quite unexplainable. He wrote that he had not been obtained in Canada, and advised poor Joe to try his fortune here. What could have been his object in such gross deception, I cannot imagine, but such it was. It

may have been a desire for companionship of one of his countrymen, but whatever influenced him to persuade Joe to come to Canada, it was a disastrous step, and dreadful consequences followed. The recommendation of his cousin finally decided him to pull up his stakes in the old land, to leave his father, and mother, and family, the associations and companions among whom his life had been spent, and set out across the trackless ocean to an unknown land, for the sake of rescuing the wife to whom he had pledged his truth with the bright hope that he might rescue her from the demon of appetite, into whose clutches she had fallen. Having once determined upon this course, the first thing he had to do, was to get a discharge from the military service, and this was not obtained without some difficulty. His father paid him what would have been his share of the paternal estate, when it would have been ultimately divided; with a portion of this he bought his discharge from the army. The last farewells were said, to the dear ones there, and Joe started on his momentous journey to the new world, and they arrived safely in the promised land about 1840, I think.

How bitterly and deeply must he have felt the disappointment to his hopes for his wife, when he found that whiskey was everywhere used without let or hindrance, and sold at twenty-five cents a quart, and here we cannot help but feel a deep sympathy for poor Joe.

The first move was to find a house in which to live, and then to seek employment. They were foreigners in a strange land and what became of the cousin I do not know. I never remember Joe alluding to him after he arrived in Cobourg. But as so often happens to us poor mortals here, a gleam of sunshine shone through the thick darkness surrounding him.

Joe learned that Colonel Covert, a rich man, who had been educated in France, was living a few miles east of the town known throughout the district as kind and liberal, to his dependants, and generous to the poor and needy who sought his aid. Joe always spoke feelingly of the kindness shown to them by the Colonel. He gave employment to him at once. He would walk regularly to his work there on Monday and return on Saturday. This he did for some time, always being faithful at his work, anxious that he should succeed and provide a home for his family. But this was not to be. Soon the mutterings of a coming storm fell upon his ear. His wife, a sharp and clever woman soon found the means of obtaining intoxicants, and for the gratification of the unholy appetite, she was willing to sacrifice honor, and everything that a woman should hold dear. I should not say, willing, for God knows how she may have struggled against the monster into whose grasp she had fallen.

Coming home on Saturday evening he found she had been in a prolonged state of intoxication. Things went from bad to worse, nothing could restrain her, she would sell every article in the house, if necessary, to obtain the means of gratifying this intense craving of the physical disease. Another comes in the strange thing of all, in connection with it. It never entered into Joe's mind that he could become the victim of the same curse.

Drunkenness a hundred years ago was little known in rural France. The common wines of the country were used as an ordinary beverage, and strong liquors were rarely touched. Had his wife not kept a wine shop, where brandy and stronger liquors were sold, the chances are she never would have become an inebriate, however. Joe commenced taking a little now and then. He gradually became fond of it, but at this time was not a habitual drinker; it followed naturally, when he followed home, after a hard week's labor, finding her intoxicated, he would become incensed, and angry quarrels would follow. Like all French people they were very excitable and noisy talkers. Those living near, soon looked upon them as an annoyance, and slept there in the night. But the collaboration was not long in the future. Returning to his home one Saturday night, he found things in the usual state, recriminations followed, and their noisy quarrel heard by the neighbors. This latter fact had a bearing on what afterwards followed. Joe's statement went to me over and over again, as to the events of the night, and which I believe to be true, were that she fell, that he picked her up, placed her on the bed, which they had, in the lower part of the house, he took the little girl with him upstairs to the room above, and slept there during the night. In the morning it was found that the unfortunate woman had passed over "that bourne from which no traveller returns." Joe's arrest speedily followed, a coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of murder, and the poor Frenchman was handed over to the jail authorities to await the coming assizes.

One of the most eminent judges of the time, the late Chief Justice Draper, occupied the bench. But everything was sadly against poor Joe, a stranger, friendless, not able to speak the language, the noisy quarrels so frequently heard by his neighbors, told heavily against him. But upon what grounds the jury found him guilty I do not know; but the sad fact followed that "guilty" was the fatal word pronounced by the form of the jury, and in due course the awful sentence of "death" followed. I asked Joe what his feelings were while that dread sentence hung over his head. He said it never cost him a bit of anxiety. He knew he was not guilty, he did not fear physical death, and he had no fear of the future. He could say with Shakespeare, "only a guilty conscience makes cowards of us. I believe Justice Draper himself was not satisfied as to the justice of the verdict, and either through his repre-

sentation, or through some of the Cobourg people, who had the same feeling, representations were made to the government, and the sentence was commuted to the next best thing. What a sad change to the picture. Leaving his own land a few years before, full of hope and strength, and now a mangled convict. And what is the underlying cause of the change? Strong drink could be painted on every step of the way. For fifteen years he remained in the penitentiary. By his inviolable good conduct he gained the confidence of the warden, and the other officials, so the hardships of confinement were somewhat mitigated. He was largely employed about the grounds, of which work he was passionately fond. He became gradually habituated to prison life, and thus the days passed peacefully on. He at times would speak most earnestly on the kindness shown by the Roman Catholic chaplain of the prison. He used to say the one privation he felt worst of all while there, was his tobacco, of which he was very fond; and if he ever was guilty of violating any of the rules, it was while surreptitiously obtaining the coveted weed, and for which he would run the risk of discovery, and the consequence that would follow. I learned from what he told me in frequent conversations with him about it that a very lax state of discipline prevailed at the time. Whether Joe's views were correct or not, one thing is certain, that the matter was taken up by Parliament and a commission was issued appointing the late Hon. Mr. Dorion and the Hon. G. G. Brown to investigate and report on the condition and management of the penitentiaries and prisons in Ontario and Quebec.

I mention this because it had an important bearing on poor Joe's future. His case came under their consideration, and so convinced were they of his innocence, and the injustice of his sentence, that they recommended his dismissal; and then our poor old friend Joe, was cast upon the world to make his way as best he could. Stripped of everything, his reputation gone, no means to help himself, it is little wonder that he was driven to the last extremity of strong drink that still existed, only wanting a spark to call the fiery monster again into existence. Intemperance became his one fatal temptation which followed him to the end.

How was he to obtain a decent living, having the brand of a convict, and being a native of Cobourg, and it shows that some of the people had pity for the unfortunate, for he obtained employment there. Here let me go back for a while. The little girl that was left both fatherless and motherless for whom Joe's affection was most intense, was cared for and perhaps received a better training and education, making her better fitted for a life of usefulness and happiness, than if she had been raised in a home degraded as theirs must necessarily have been. Again the goodness of Colonel Covert to his humble servant is shown, as evidently the tiny of the little child was to be his daughters, Mrs. Moffatt (whose husband was at the time a member of the firm of Moffatt, Murray and Co., Toronto), took her and trained her as a domestic servant. During the time that Joe lived with her, his great anxiety was to see her, his only child, I remember once of his having heard a rumor that an old friend of his at Newcastle had heard of her whereabouts, and he could not rest till he went down there, and exhausted every effort to get trace of her. The desire to see her again seemed to grow in intensity year by year. This yearning of his heart was truly gratified. At his request, he wrote to the lady in Toronto, who at once kindly and promptly replied, stating that she had left her years before and did not know where she had gone, but understood that she had married, and settled in some part of the province. Perhaps as well as it could, I have been a disappointment to both. After leaving Cobourg, he went to Newcastle, how long he remained there, or how his time was spent I do not know. He would occasionally refer to Mr. Bevis, postmaster, and Mr. James, with gratitude to whom often expressed his affection for the gentleman. I had about a year previously moved to "The Evergreens," (now the residence of J. W. Alexander Esq., president of the Dominion Organ and Piano Company) and Joe hearing I was in want of a man applied, the offer of wages of a man applied, and was accepted, and I made him as my assistant. He had been a pretty old man, sixty-five years of age, but strong and vigorous. He remained with me during the eleven years that I resided there. He was an incessant talker, never saw him without a story, and I can recount his many virtues. I said before, strictly truthful, trustworthy, cheerful, kind to every living thing that he came in contact with. Nothing aroused him to a white heat of passion, as a kind man, he manifested the most patient forbearance towards children. He was really touching at times. He saw the tender care, he took of the little ones, that might be placed in his charge, and if any of the servants in the house undertook to speak rudely or touch unkindly a child, if Joe were around they had not to pay the penalty. He fully appreciated any kindness shown him, and never forgot any of his benefactors. He was a splendid gardener. He seemed to have a magic power to make things grow, but strange to

say he had no taste for the beautiful, in either nature or art. He knew nothing about the cultivation of fruit trees, and as for flowers they were an abomination to him. Indeed, anything that could not be usefully used and that in the growth of which time and labor was expended, was to his mind a sinful waste. This was the imagination, I presume, grew out of the conditions surrounding his early years, where the hard struggle to exist prevented the cultivation of anything of higher tastes. But in spite of every influence, he would occasionally get on a fearful spree, and then his dearly loved wages went for that which men put in their mouths to steal away their brains. My story will now soon be told. When I moved into my present residence Joe left me, and engaged himself with a farmer up the Baie line, but soon became dissatisfied, and his health attendant on old age, he came back to town and took a room in a house near us. He gradually broke up, but always managed to come to us, needless to say, the whole household took pleasure in ministering to his wants. When he fully realized that his end was approaching, a burning desire took possession of his heart, that he might again revisit his native land, and be buried with his ancestors in the France that he so dearly loved. To accomplish this purpose he had saved some little means, sufficient to pay his passage home. Finally the impossible for him to tear himself away. One could not but be touched with the tenderness of his nature, exhibited in the last parting scene. The bus man was impatiently waiting in the road; he came back four or five times to say "good-bye, God bless you." I went with him to the railway train, saw him into the car, and saw him start on his journey. I do not think he ever reached his destination. It may seem odd, why I should pay this tribute to his memory. Few will recall him, and the greater part who may read these lines, could have no interest in his fate. Do not the "foot-prints of the poor and lowly, leave in the sands of time, impressions fraught with as great moral lessons, as those of the learned and rich?" I think they do, and certainly this story points a moral, if it does not adorn a tale. A trite saying but true, "facts are often stranger than fiction."

PRINCE TO VISIT INDIA

HEIR TO THRONE TO REPEAT HIS FATHER'S TOUR.

Arrangements Are Already Well Under Way for the Visit.

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In the course of the tour his Royal Highness will hold receptions of those native princes and rulers, who exercise their authority under the supreme authority of the British Crown. Leves will be held, at which there will be presented to the Prince the most distinguished personages in King Edward's Eastern dominions.

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On July 17, 1875, a demonstration was held in Hyde Park to protest against the grant of money which was then being proposed in Parliament to defray the expenses of the tour. Mr. Fawcett, afterwards the blind Postmaster-General, objected to the vote, partly on sentimental and partly on economical grounds. Mr. John Bright spoke in favor of the traveling allowance, but stated in the course of the debate that the country could not allow the heir-apparent to go out with a portmanteau in one hand and an umbrella in the other.

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POMP AND CEREMONIAL. The Prince arrived in time to celebrate his birthday in India. Some idea of the pomp of the coronation which he is to undergo in London when it is mentioned that he sat on a silver throne to receive the native princes and rajahs who flocked to present their respects in person. The first potentate presented was the Rajah of Kholapur, a child two years old, the ruler of nearly a million of people. The little rajah was attired in purple velvet and

The Average Man Doesn't Know The First Thing

about flour, but the woman who does the family baking—she is the one who appreciates Royal Household Flour—made by the new electrical process—because when she tries it with the simple "Royal Household" recipes she finds it makes better, sweeter, whiter, lighter Bread, Buns, Rolls, etc., and more crisp and delicious Pastry than she ever made before, and she is not afraid to say so.

South Range, Digby Co., N. S., November 22nd. "I want to tell you that Royal Household Flour is the best I ever used in all my life, and the only kind I will have as long as I can get it." (Signed.) MRS. ALEX. PORTER.

To any woman sending in name and address to The Ogilvie Flour Mills Co., Limited, Montreal, and mentioning this paper, these recipes will be sent FREE.

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white muslin encrusted with gems his turban containing a king's ransom of pearls and rubies. It was a terribly hot day, and though the reception was held at 8 a.m., the Prince was commiserated upon having to wear an English uniform of cloth loaded with lace "and buttoned up to his throat."

REVIEW AT POONA.

In November his Royal Highness visited Poona, where he held a review from the bank of an elephant of extraordinary size; the howdah on which he sat cost four lakhs of rupees. He attended a cheshah hunt, killing a fine buck, and earned his spurs at wild boar chasing by killing an animal with his own spear. Christmas was spent in Calcutta, and on New Year's Day he held a chapter of the Order of the Star of India. His Royal Highness wore a field-marshal's uniform, almost concealed beneath the folds of his sky-blue mantle. The chapter tent was carpeted with cloth of gold.

SLAVERY IN AUSTRALIA.

The London Times says: We take the following extracts from a letter addressed to us by Mr. Walter Malcolmson, who admires reports upon statements made by Mr. Walter James, Agent-General for Western Australia, in the Times of March 4. Writing from Marine Parade, Holywood, near Belfast, Mr. Malcolmson says: "The Western Australian laws at present in force not only permit slavery, but make it compulsory. They also allow any half-caste or aboriginal child, having attained a suitable age, to be apprenticed to anyone wanting him, for any purpose, until 21 years old. Eight or nine years is generally a suitable age in the eyes of the employer. Ask the consent of the parents of the child? They are only beasts of burden, unworthy of the slightest consideration. "Mr. James says, Dr. Roth's report discloses abuses of which the Government had no knowledge. I deny this. I can submit indisputable evidence to prove that the Government were thoroughly well informed on the matter. "Mr. James says, 'The objectionable practices have been isolated, and have occurred where close and regular police supervision is impossible.' This, in face of Dr. Roth's report that the police receive payment for each prisoner or witness, and consequently arrest the natives on the slightest pretext, and starve and beat them. And Mr. James' remedy is 'more police supervision.' "Mr. James says, 'For years past there has been a chief protector of aborigines.' Mr. Phipps has proved utterly unfit to protect the natives. In reply to a letter of mine in 1901 he wrote: "I can say, as an impartial man, that for many years past the treatment of the natives has been one of generous consideration for their helpless and ignorant state." Dr. Roth, after a few weeks spent in West Australia, reports abuses to which Professor Phipps has remained officially blind for years. "I will finish by asking Mr. James why Ernest W. Anderson was released from jail—secretly—last year, after serving about six years of his life sentence. Chief Justice Onslow, in sentencing Anderson, said, 'Your crime is nothing but a deliberate, brutal, base, and cruel murder of a man and two women, and the inhuman flogging of mere girls, helpless and defenceless for life. Anderson's case the sentence would not be reduced to one of twenty years. Anderson was a squatter who flogged his indentured to death with a knotted rope. The slaves got little sympathy, but quite a lot of Western Australian people pity poor Anderson."

A gentleman took his little sister with him while calling the other evening at a house where he is a regular visitor. The little girl made herself quite at home, and showed great fondness for one of the young ladies, hugging her heartily. "How very affectionate she is!" said the lady of the house. "Yes; so like her brother!" responded the young lady, unthinkingly.

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