

A FÊTE DIEU PROCESSION IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

A fine day in June is a good gift from God. I know of no better way of sanctifying it than hearing mass in a country village in the Province of Quebec, and taking part in the fête Dieu procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The particular village that E—— and I chose this year in which to combine our visible expression of devotion and our invisible study of French Canadian life and character, was Sault au-Recollet, seven miles from the heart of the city of Montreal, on the southern branch of the Ottawa, known as the Rivière des Prairies. Half an hour's ride in one of the crowded carriages of the Canadian Pacific Railway, wherein you have made the acquaintance (by sight only) of one or two eminent Canadian statesmen, a missionary bishop, two nuns, three young seminarians, various thrifty housewives returning with their week's supply of necessities, a farmer or two, divers travelling agents, a man whose leg had been blown off recently in a gas explosion and who persisted in being taken home to be nursed, three priests, and last and most lovely, a little maid of ten summers, in spotless white raiment, wreath, and veil, going out by train to receive the blessing of "grandpere," she having that morning made her first communion.

"Sault-au-Recollet!" calls the conductor, and you, by means of a brave little jump, alight on the platform, which is almost two feet below the step of the carriage, and look wildly around you as the train steams slowly off to crawl through the iron suspension bridge which spans the rapids between Sault-au-Récollet and Bord-au-Plouffe. Carriages there are none, apparently; but as you gaze a spider-like vehicle, drawn by a veritable ghost of Rosinante, comes in sight and the driver declares himself bound for the village. Along with a small contingent of our fellow-passengers E—— and I entered this chariot, called in these parts "la diligence."

The road winds along the margin of the turbulent river, and the music of the ever-foaming rapids keeps time to our tuneful thoughts. Under branching elms, across cool, bubbling streams, and past picturesque cottages we are slowly driven. A turn in the road brings us to a lofty mission cross in a little inclosure by the wayside. Upon the cross are nailed the instruments of the Passion, and as we pass it our driver lifts his hat in salutation. Before this simple shrine knelt a little girl in a blue frock, her high straw hat trimmed with a band of vivid red, and her chaplet between her little brown fingers. Further along the road we encountered a band of children, all dressed with neatness and a picturesque effect of colour; they were singing lustily, with all the power of their shrill little voices, and the burden of their song was in the interests of the morrow.

Donnez, donnez, donnez, donnez,
Donnez, donnez un beau jour!

When the cross-roads were reached our driver reined up. Rosinante and alighted at the door of a large brick building known as "Peloquin's Hotel," a house liberally patronized both in summer and winter by excursion parties from the city.

Admirable in all its arrangements we found this village hostelry, and it was in a very contented frame of mind that we opened our eyes on the morning of "Procession Sunday." Our awakening was at an early hour, for, determined to share all the village privileges, we had decided upon approaching the sacraments in the little chapel of the Jesuit Fathers' novitiate, situated fully a mile from Peloquin's. A well laid "trottoir" extends along the roadside, so that our shoes were none the worse of the dampness of earth and grass as we slowly wended our way along the beautiful country road. Throughout the night the rainfall had been considerable, and a cloudy sky frowning sullenly above the rapid river gave promise of bad weather and a consequent disappointment. Our walk was most enjoyable, in spite of the threatening aspect of nature—the country was so lovely in its new spring livery, and the gardens all so sweet with their brave show of lilacs and lilies. Pretty cottages extend

from Peloquin's to the beautiful Convent of the Sacred Heart, the well-kept grounds of which occupy a large space on the map of our route. Then the road meets the river, and the two run along in harmony for a little way until the shore widens out from us, and we pass on under the lindens and over a meadow where a brook murmurs among the sweet cowslips and choke-cherry trees. On we go past shrines of curious style and decoration, past primitive Canadian cottages and more stately houses in shaded grounds, past the residence St. Janvier, presented by Monsignor Vinet to the diocese of Montreal, as a home for invalided priests—on until we come to "the Hill which is called Beautiful," or in other words, to the gateway which divides from the outer world the Canadian novitiate of the Society of Jesus. Up the broad plane of avenue, under the grand o'd limes and elms, past a shrine of the Blessed Mother, in the shadow of which is a parterre of flowers planted in the device of the sacred monogram, and an unpretending flight of steps leads us to the small brown door through which so many men have entered as Saul to emerge as Paul. It was a new experience this, and we trembled somewhat at our own temerity. The door was opened by a young lay brother, a pretty boy of possibly twenty years of age, whose downcast lids could not well veil the beauty of his large lustrous eyes.

We asked for an English-speaking father, and he ushered us into the poor little chapel to prepare for confession. What a poor chapel! Poor as to space, furniture, and decoration, and yet how holy! A quaint old altar, some good oil-paintings, two bits of delicate painting in needlework, old and of great value, a terrible suggestion in crude colour of St. Michael on the war-path—the picture, I was afterwards told, was painted by a native Mexican, which probably accounts for the saint having five ostrich-leathers in his hair—a side altar to the Blessed Virgin, a small harmonium, and some rows of yellow benches complete the inventory of the furniture of this nursery of saints. I am forgetting to include the confessional, of tiny proportions, tucked behind the door in such wise that the penitent is more or less shaken according as the door be more or less frequently opened during the time of his recital of transgressions.

Half-past eight saw us retracing our footsteps, duly fortified for the fatigue of the morning. Passed us rolled neat vehicles, full beyond the original intention of the builders, for none could be left at home to-day: even the babies must come to do honour to the Bon Dieu. From all the quaint old homesteads came the families in Sunday raiment; along an avenue to our left came evidently an entire household, the mother of proportions seldom attained save by a daughter of Israel or a French-Canadian matron, the father as thin as a rail, his shining broadcloth coat hanging in wrinkles around him, his trowsers showing a strongly-marked crease down the centre of each calf, and his silk hat resplendent in gloss though antique in shape. In his arms, clad in pink and blue, reposed the baby. Before us trotted two tiny boys, aged possibly four and six. The broad space of greensward in front of the church was edged by horses and carriages tied to the fence—nicely kept horses and carriages, telling of the prosperity of Sault-au-Recollet. There was no loitering outside to talk of current events; each parishoner with grave solemnity entered the church and took his seat. We did likewise with this difference that we took some one else's seat.

In some parts of the sacred edifice there was room and to spare; in others seats were at a premium. I counted nine little boys perched on the holy-water cask. In they came, the good country people, many of them in gorgeous toilets. After the gospel the curé made the announcements for the following week, beginning with a few well-chosen words on the subject of the procession of the day, in which he recommended his flock not to engage in idle conversation on the route, but to say their beads and endeavour to remain recollected. In the sanctuary were seated three old priests from St. Janvier, the vicaire of the parish, and two young Jesuits from the novitiate.

At the conclusion of the Mass we all left the church for