

that, should the peril be averted, he, Maisonneuve, would bear another cross on his shoulders up the neighboring mountain, and place it on the summit. The vow seemed in vain. The flood still rose, filled the fort ditch, swept the foot of the palisade, and threatened to sap the magazine; but here it stopped and presently began to recede, till at length it had withdrawn within its lawful channel, and Villemarie was safe.*

Now it remained to fulfil the promise which such happy results had proceeded. Maisonneuve set his men at work to clear a path through the forest to the top of the mountain. A large cross was made, and solemnly blessed by the priest; then, on the sixth of January, the Jesuit Du Peron led the way, followed by Madame de la Peltrie, the artisans and soldiers to the destined spot. The commandant, who with all the ceremonies of the Church had been declared First Soldier of the Cross, walked behind the rest, bearing on his shoulder a cross so heavy that it needed his utmost strength to climb the steep and rugged path. They planted it on the highest crest, and all knelt in adoration before it. Du Peltrie, always romantic and always devout, received the sacrament on the mountain-top, a spectacle to the virgin world outstretched below. Sundry relics of saints had been set in the wood of the cross, which remained an object of pilgrimage to the pious colonists of Villemarie.

Peace and harmony reigned within the little fort; and so edifying was the demeanor of the colonists, so faithful were they to the confessional, and so constant at mass, that a chronicler of the day exclaims, in a burst of enthusiasm, that the deserts lately a resort for demons were now the abode of angels. The two Jesuits who for the time were their pastors had them well in hand. They dwelt under the same roof with most of their flock, who lived in the community, in one large house, and vied with each other in zeal for the honor of the Virgin and the conversion of the Indians.

At the end of August, 1643, a vessel arrived at Villemarie with a reinforcement commanded by Louis d'Ailleboust de Coulonges, a pious gentleman of Champagne, and one of the Associates of Montreal. Some years before, he had asked in wedlock the hand of Barbe de Boulogne; but the young lady had, when a child, in the ardor of her piety, taken a vow of perpetual chastity. By the advice of her Jesuit confessor she accepted his suit, on condition that she should preserve, to the hour of her death, the state to which Holy Church has always ascribed a peculiar merit.† D'Ailleboust married her; and when, soon after, he conceived the purpose of devoting his life to the work of the Faith in Canada, he invited his maiden spouse to go with him, she refused and forbade him to mention the subject again. Her health was indifferent and about this time she fell ill. As a last resort, she made a promise to God, that, if He would restore her, she would go to Canada with her husband; and forthwith her maladies ceased. Still her reluctance continued; she hesitated, and then refused again, when an inward light revealed to her that it was her duty to cast her lot in the wilderness. She accordingly embarked with d'Ailleboust, accompanied by her sister Mademoiselle Philippine de Boulogne, who had caught the contagion of her zeal. The presence of these dansels, would, to all appearance, be rather a burden than a profit to the colonists, beset as they then were by Indians, and often in peril of starvation; but the spectacle of their ardor, as disinterested as it was extravagant, would serve to exalt the religious enthusiasm in which alone was the life of Villemarie.

Their vessel passed in safety the Iroquois who watched the St. Lawrence, and its arrival filled the colonists with joy. D'Ailleboust was a skilful soldier, specially versed in the arts of fortification; and, under his direction, the frail palisades which formed their sole defence were replaced by solid ramparts and bastions of earth. He brought news that the "unknown benefactress," as a certain generous member of the Association of Montreal was called, in ignorance of her name, had given funds to the amount, as afterwards appeared of forty-two thousand livres, for the building of a hospital at Villemarie. The source of the gift was kept secret, from a religious motive; but it soon became known that it proceeded from Madame de Bullion, a lady whose rank and wealth was exceeded only by her devotion. It is true that the hospital was not wanted, as no one was sick at Villemarie, and one or two chambers would have sufficed for every prospective necessity; but it will be remembered that a colony had been established in order that a hospital might be built, and Madame de Bullion would not hear of any other application of

her money.‡ Instead, therefore, of tilling the land to supply their own pressing needs, all the laborers of the settlement were set at this pious, though superfluous, task. There was no room in the fort, which, moreover, was in danger of inundation; and the hospital was accordingly built on higher ground adjacent. To leave it unprotected would be to abandon its inmates to the Iroquois; it was therefore surrounded by a strong palisade, and, in time of danger, a part of the garrison was detailed to defend it. Here Mademoiselle Mance took up her abode, and waited the day when wounds or disease should bring patients to her empty wards.

Daversière, who had first conceived this plan of a hospital in the wilderness, was a senseless enthusiast, who rejected as a sin every protest of reason against the dreams which governed him; yet one rational and practical element entered into the motive of those who carried the plan into execution. The hospital was intended not only to nurse sick Frenchmen, but to nurse and convert sick Indians; in other words, it was an engine of the mission.

From Maisonneuve to the humblest laborer, these zealous colonists were bent on the work of conversion. To that end the ladies made pilgrimages to the cross on the mountain, sometimes for nine days in succession, to pray God to carry the heathen into His fold. The fatigue was great nor was the danger less; and armed men always escorted them, as a precaution against the Iroquois. The male colonists were equally fervent; and sometimes as many as fifteen or sixteen persons would kneel at once before the cross with the same charitable petition. The ardour of their zeal may be inferred from the fact, that these pious expeditions consumed the greater part of the day, when time and labor were of a value past reckoning to the little colony. Besides their pilgrimages, they used other means, and very efficient ones, to attract and gain over the Indians. They housed, fed, and clothed them at every opportunity; and though they were subsisting chiefly on provisions brought at great cost from France, there was always a portion for the hungry savages who from time to time encamped near their fort. If they could persuade any of them to be nursed, they were consigned to the tender care of Mademoiselle Mance; and if a party went to war, their women and children were taken in charge till their return. As this attention to their bodies had for its object the profit of their souls, it was accompanied with incessant catechising. This, with the other influences of the place, had its effect; and some notable conversions were made. Among them was the renowned chief, Tessouat, or Le Borgne, as the French called him,—a crafty and intractable savage, whom, to their own surprise, they succeeded in taming and winning to the Faith.¶ He was christened with the name of Paul, and his squaw with that of Madeline. Maisonneuve rewarded him with a gun, and celebrated the day by a feast to all the Indians present.§

The French hoped to form an agricultural settlement of Indians in the neighborhood of Villemarie; and they spared no exertion to this end, giving them tools and aiding them to till the fields. They might have succeeded, but for that pest of the wilderness, the Iroquois, who hovered about them, harassed them with petty attacks, and again and again drove the Algonquins in terror from their camps. Some time had elapsed, as we have seen, before the Iroquois discovered Villemarie; but at length ten fugitive Algonquins, chased by a party of them, made for the friendly settlement as a safe asylum; and thus their astonished pursuers became aware of its existence. They reconnoitred the place, and went back to their towns with the news. From that time forth the colonists had no peace; no more excursions for fishing and hunting; no more Sunday strolls in woods and meadows. The men went armed to their work and returned at the sound of a bell, marching in a compact body, prepared for an attack.

Early in June, 1643, sixty Hurons came down in canoes for traffic, and, on reaching the place now called Lachine, at the head of the rapids of St. Louis, and a few miles above Villemarie, they were amazed at finding a large Iroquois war-party in a fort hastily

* A little MS. map in M. Jacques Viger's copy of *La Petit Registre de la Cure de Montreal*, lays down the position and shape of the fort at this time, and shows the spot where Maisonneuve planted the cross.

† Juchereau, *Histoire de l'Hôtel-Dieu, Québec*, 276. The confessor told D'Ailleboust, that, if he persuaded his wife to break her vow of continence, "God would chastise him terribly." The nun historian adds, that undeterred by the menace, he tried and failed.

‡ *Journal des Supérieurs des Jésuites*, MS. The hospital was sixty feet long and twenty-four feet wide, with a kitchen, a chamber for Mademoiselle Mance, others for the servants, and two large apartments for the patients. It was amply provided with furniture, linen, medicines, and all necessaries; and had also two oxen, three cows, and twenty sheep. A small oratory of stone was built adjoining it. The inclosure was four arpents in extent.—*Archives du Séminaire de Villemarie*, cited by Fallion.

¶ Vimont, *Relation*, 1643, 54, 55. Tessouat was chief of Alouette Island in the Ottawa. His predecessor, of the same name, was Champlain's host in 1613.—See "Pioneers of France, Chap." xii.

§ It was the usual practice to give guns to converts, "pour attirer leurs compatriotes à la Foy." They were never given to heathen Indians. "It seems," observes Vimont, "that our Lord wishes to make use of this method in order that Christianity may become acceptable in this country." *Relation*, 1643, 71.