

At Ste. Anne De Beupre ON THE FEAST DAY

(By Margaret Lillis Hart.) The following article written three years ago for the True Witness of Montreal, is in view of the approach of the Feast of Ste. Anne de Beupre, here reproduced:

THE WONDERFUL SHRINE.— It is surely no exaggeration to say that the shrine of Ste. Anne de Beupre is wonderful. To those who are familiar with it from childhood, who have imbibed its associations with their earliest breath and who perhaps have come to regard its developments as simply everyday occurrences, the shrine and its accompaniments may by familiarly appear to be merely ordinary, but to those who live within its atmosphere but for a short space once or twice in a lifetime, the impression produced is one not to be easily effaced, to such the whole appears indeed to be extraordinary, wonderful.

The first feeling is one of surprise and delight; surprise at the unexpected grandeur of the beautiful church and the many treasures it possesses and delight at the delicacy of detail and the general perfect harmony that meets the eye in whatsoever direction one may turn. Considering the antiquity of the shrine and its history and despite the many thousands who visit it during the summer months, the marvel is that it is not more generally known, for surely no spot in the Western world is endowed with greater spiritual grace, more astonishing manifestations of the wondrous work which God performs through his servants, or more complete with everything that can delight the eye and please the heart of the Catholic pilgrim than that of the glorious shrine of Ste. Anne in the little village of Beupre.

To many throughout America and all the old province of Quebec, the story of Ste. Anne de Beupre is as well known as is that of their own family life, but there may be some who have not yet heard of the Breton navigators who early in the 17th century sailed the broad St. Lawrence and when a storm arose and they found themselves in imminent danger of being lost, implored the help of the bonne Ste. Anne, promising to erect in her honor a sanctuary on the spot on which they should land should she but come to their assistance. At once their prayer was heard. Next morning on finding themselves upon the shore of the river which had threatened to engulf them, they did not forget their promise, but immediately set to work and built a little wooden chapel in honor of their true friend, the good Ste. Anne. This was the first of the several chapels built on the spot then known as Petit Cap situated about twenty-one miles from the rugged and threatening front of the now city of Quebec.

Way back in the days when the French mariners sailed their own blue seas or walked amidst the smiling vineyards of sunny France, they had been accustomed to pray to the good Ste. Anne; she had been their patroness from time immemorial. Ever since the day when the miraculous bark set out from Palestine and manned by Lazarus accompanied by his sisters Mary and Martha bearing with them many relics, the most precious of which was the hallowed body of Ste. Anne, was borne to the shores of France, just so long have the French recognized her as their patron and benefactor. Thus it was the most natural thing in the world for the sailors on the St. Lawrence to ask the aid of the one to whom they had always appealed in the Old Land, and who in the past had never been found wanting or called upon in vain.

As far distant as 1667 Menseigneur de Laval the first Bishop of Quebec, placed the stamp of the authority of the Church on the special devotion of New France to Ste. Anne when in a pastoral letter to his people, he declared the feast of the saint a holiday of obligation, and this because "Christianity has in these countries a particular need of powerful protectors in heaven, and because we witness a general recourse of the faithful to Ste. Anne in all their needs, and that it has pleased God for some years past to manifest by a number of wondrous favors that this devotion is pleasing to Him."

THE BASILICA.— The present Church which contains the shrine is the fourth built upon the spot or within the vicinity of the little rude chapel of the Breton mariners. Let anyone who has not seen this work of art imagine himself at the door of its hallowed precincts. He is confronted by a lofty dome, sky-like in its coloring of blue, adorned with many golden stars and supported by gracefully proportioned and fluted marble pillars rich in exquisite veining of pink and red; these pillars stand on massive marble pedestals whose darker coloring sends out more strikingly the lighter beauty of the columns they support. The walls of the Church are of the same pearly stone showing the same reddish veining and the ceiling and sides are separated by a fresco of gold and white. Above this round the entire circumference of the dome are pictures graphically descriptive of the work of Ste. Anne, at Beupre. Side altars of Our Blessed Lord, the Blessed Virgin, Ste. Anne and other saints, each one a work of art and a study in itself, are round the Church and magnificent paintings in oil are lavishly displayed. The floor alone is a work worthy of great admiration. It is Champlean marble set in geometric designs and showing generously the Pompeian red now found so rarely. The altar railing of the whitest of white marble, displays the different scenes in the life of Our Blessed Lord and figures typical of the Blessed Sacrament. This railing is said to be handsomer than anything

of its kind, even in the greatest churches of the Eastern world. But it is within the sanctuary and directly in front that the eye finds its first attraction. Here is the grand altar also of white marble with rich adornments of brass, the dome upheld by graceful columns and the altar background of softened green and gold.

The foliage that adorns the altar, rising gracefully and generously on either side and almost meeting above, is singularly striking on account of its rare coloring. The bloom, a large bell-like bulb, is a delicate heliotrope in hue, and it together with white and delicate pink which alone are added to it, produce the effect of one great vine of exquisite shading, surrounding and embellishing the enclosure containing the tabernacle and costly ornaments of the altar.

Outside the rail and directly in front stands the celebrated statue of Ste. Anne holding the Child Mary in her arms. This is raised on a magnificent pedestal of highly polished onyx and surrounded by lights, flowers, and a pyramid of crutches, left by those who have partaken of the favors of the saint.

But it is when the Church is lighted for Benediction that the scene is most impressive. The floor from wall to wall is covered with kneeling worshippers, no aisle is visible; the electric lights appear all around the stately dome and the golden rays from the statue of Ste. Anne shine with renewed brilliancy when the bulbs of light surround it. The magnificent main altar is outlined at every point by tiny electric globes, the myriad waxen tapers burn with a softened radiance, the smoking incense rises and floats over the kneeling people; the rare foliage, the rich dark stalls in the sanctuary, the magnificent reliquary, the priests in rich vestments, the sweet toned organ rising through the Church, all tend to one grand harmony never to be forgotten; at the immediate time of Benediction, the lights around Ste. Anne go out, and the High Altar flashes forth in all its glory and proclaims that the Lord Himself is there supreme.

This Church after the old one had been taken down and the material used in the construction of a chapel near, was completed in 1876. The architecture is Corinthian, the Church measures two hundred feet in length by one hundred and five in breadth; the height of the interior is fifty-six feet, and the towers are one hundred and sixty-eight feet in height. In front are three doors flanked by fluted pillars on handsome pedestals; over the doors are carved the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity; the great statue of Ste. Anne, fourteen feet in height, surmounts the whole. Facing the Church is an immense square with wide gravel walks, separating the lawns and beds of bloom; flags and pennants left by pilgrims at different times fly from staffs at every corner; the river flows near and the contiguous hills dotted with little white houses almost buried in the thickly growing trees, form a picturesque background for this unique shrine in honor of Ste. Anne, Mother of Our Blessed Lady and Grandemere de Dieu.

THE FEAST DAY, Sunday, July 26th, will be long remembered by those assembled on that day at Ste. Anne de Beupre. From five o'clock in the morning Masses were being celebrated unceasingly; main altar, side altar, chapels—each had its celebrant, the altar of Ste. Anne especially was stormed at an early hour by the Canadian priests from all over the Dominion anxious for the privilege of saying Mass at her altar. To and fro passed the vested levites, each with his server, and each taking position at an altar where already a crowd awaited him or by whom he was quickly followed. Seventy-five of God's ministers are said to have offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at Beupre on the feast of its great patron. Like the wise men of old they had come from afar; Washington, Boston, New York, Detroit, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Cleveland, Ohio, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, were amongst the names of the places whence they hailed. Three High Masses, one quickly following the other, brought the morning to a close. The last Grand High Mass was at ten o'clock, and at it the Archbishop of Quebec, who had come to honor the occasion, presided at the Throne. The celebrant was an old priest, whose white locks showed him to be a veteran in the service of the Lord. The Church was crowded, and all its grandeur stood revealed in the light of the morning sunshine; the music of the Mass was that of the Second Tone, sung by a male choir, with all the enthusiasm and devotion which the French alone seem able to impart, and the Plain Chant was varied by a "Salve Regina" of a more florid nature and a hymn to la bonne Sainte Anne.

An impassioned sermon in French was preached by an eloquent speaker. We knew he was eloquent because the words came forth like the flow of a fountain, and his entire being seemed to vibrate with the thought he expressed; every gesture and motion added to the impressiveness of his message. How one wished for the power to follow him in every word he uttered, how blind at that moment seemed the indifference of those who living in Quebec do not avail themselves of their opportunities to acquire in all its fullness the expressive language of France. But soon our turn came. A young priest ascended the pulpit, and in loving, fervent words, told us of the power of Good Saint Anne. "Many of you," said the speaker, "have come from a long distance; you have spent your time and your means to reach this statue, and why? Because you feel that you have need of the help of the good Mother; you wish to ask her blessing upon your life or to obtain some grace, or some favor, for this good Mother is all powerful. The speaker concluded a touching discourse by exhorting his hearers to "pray, especially during the feast

that she may obtain for us to love Almighty God with our whole heart and our whole strength; then the day will come when we shall kneel before Almighty God and in her presence thank Him for all the blessings conferred upon us in life."

In the afternoon came Vespers and Benediction; the thousands of the morning had been augmented by two large pilgrimages, and now church and environment were simply packed; it is said that ten thousand took part in the exercises of the day. Between Vespers and Benediction the procession, always one of the features of the feast, took place. The immense throng headed by cross-bearer, emerged from the Church, the women first, then the men; on their came stretching out in long serpentine lengths along the broad and sinuous paths of the square facing the facade. Here were lay and religious, regular and secular; the laity in varied garb; the black robed Brother, the brown habited and white-corded Franciscan, the black cassocked secular, the several gumpes and veils of the different communities of Sisters, the rightly vested Redemptorist and the purple robed prelate were all here. A priest with stentorian voice intoned prayers to Ste. Anne, and away up on the hillside where we happened to be when the procession began to issue from the Church, we heard like the voice of another John, the cry of "Bonne Sainte Anne," and the answer from the moving masses "priez pour nous"; then the voices of the men singing verse after verse to the grand saint, in whose honor the feast was held. At the end of the line came priests richly vested carrying the relics of Ste. Anne in the magnificent reliquary; two relays were in attendance, one to relieve the other. Last of all came His Grace the Archbishop of Quebec, a prelate of dignified bearing more than ordinary, and whose purple robes made him conspicuous wheresoever he moved. Back to the Church the procession wended to the singing of the "Magnificat," and then Benediction, at which His Grace officiated. How the dense assemblage managed to get into the Church is astonishing and more astonishing still was the order maintained, when, directed by a priest from the pulpit, and another at the altar, the people advanced to venerate the relics. The control of the dense crowd by those in charge was seen at this moment for all appeared to obey the command not to move a step until those in front had performed the devotion, and moved out by the side exits.

In the evening again came Benediction, again the sermons, again the tones of the fine organ assisted, by the Palestrini Society of Quebec; again the lights made plain every nook and niche, again the rays round Ste. Anne vanished, and the lights on the High Altar flashed forth; then the solemn Benediction over the hushed multitude who never again in that spot should thus assemble together; after this the hymn of triumph by the choir, and then leaving many at the feet of Good Ste. Anne, thanking her for favors in the past or seeking new ones for the future. Truly it was a day of joy!

Besides the ceremonies just narrated, other exercises had been going on at intervals in the vestry and side chapels; Confessions, blessing articles of devotion, renewing the "Annals," arranging for Masses, and performing private devotions. The Redemptorists who have charge of the Church, priests and brothers, are not idle; the work during the feast and at the time of pilgrimages is incessant, yet patience, urbanity, hospitality, enthusiasm and religious zeal are manifested on every countenance, and the tact with which they manage the multitudes composed of so many, and such differing elements, is admired by all who witness it.

DEVOTIONS AND RELICS.— The majority of those who visit Ste. Anne receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist; as a consequence Holy Communion is given almost throughout the entire morning; before and during the Masses the Blessed Sacrament is being continually distributed to the hundreds who approach the Holy Table.

No one visits Ste. Anne without ascending the Scala Santa. These are steps within a very beautiful chapel built upon a hill on the site of the old presbytery. The steps are in imitation of those ascended by Our Lord in the palace of Pontius Pilate; the faithful ascend them on their knees. This seems difficult, and in truth it is not easy, but none are deterred on this account; some repeat the devotion several times on the same day. The broad steps on occasions are completely covered by the kneeling pilgrims; no one pays much attention to his neighbor; some kiss each step as they ascend. It would seem that even the pilgrims of old could not impart more devotion into their exercises than is here displayed. The chapel contains precious relics, and is highly indulgenced, as indeed are all the chapels and altars in this favored spot.

Above the little cemetery, where lie those who for the past three centuries have given up their souls to their Maker in the little village, are erected a set of crosses each with a little kneeling bench at its foot, and at the summit a large cross with the figure of the crucified Saviour largely outlined. These are the Stations, by the exercise of which a great indulgence is obtained. Ste. Anne's well, the water from a spring in the vicinity, and through which many pains have been ameliorated or completely vanished, is a favorite resort of the traveller to Beupre. The water is taken away in bottles brought for the purpose.

The Memorial Church, built on the site of one of the older churches, is another object worthy of a visit. Here are several large paintings in oil, to each of which some historical tale is attached. One of these is a painting by Lebrun, given by the

Marquis of Tracy, in 1664, in fulfillment of a promise to Ste. Anne on being delivered from shipwreck.

The principal relics are a part of the finger and wrist bones of the dear saint; there is also a fragment of rock from the room in which she lived at Jerusalem.

To enumerate all the treasures of Ste. Anne and to describe them would take a small volume. Among them, however, is a superb chasuble given by Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV., father of New France. Amongst the many sacred vessels is a ciborium which has been used for generations in the parish. Here the practice so beautifully described by Brummond in his "Little Cure" is in constant practice; when the priest goes on a sick call he is vested in surplice and stole and preceded by a server ringing a bell and carrying a light, goes to the home of the sick one. The inmates of the houses on the way come to the door and kneel for a moment to adore the passing Saviour, and to say a prayer for the one in agony.

A large store is attached to the Church, where articles of devotion and souvenirs of many and pretty devices are to be had at reasonable rates. These are always blessed for the pilgrims. All along the street, too, are little booths at which are seated old men or young girls displaying their wares, which are very similar to those in the store at the Church.

CURES AT THE SHRINE.— The cures that have been going on at Ste. Anne's for over three hundred years have been the subject of much comment.

That there have been cures cannot be denied; the thousands of crutches, sticks, spectacles and other instruments by which deformed or debilitated nature aids her condition, are there as evidence that those who once needed them are no longer wanting in the direction of help.

Still there are many even amongst Catholics who find it hard to accept the theory that the cures at Beupre are miraculous. These do not deny that God is all powerful; they believe in the miracle of the loaves and fishes, they doubt not for one moment the miracle performed daily on the altar, yet they find it hard to understand the cures wrought so frequently at Ste. Anne de Beupre.

So-called scientists sometimes argue themselves and others into the belief that the whole theory of miraculous working can be done away with by the process of logical reasoning; that the cures when they do occur can be traced back to natural causes, to the influence of mind over matter or similar source. To such doubting ones the cure given by Our Lord to St. Thomas seems the best that can be offered; our dear Lord did not upbraid, but pitying the weakness of the doubter, said to him: "Thomas, come hither, place thy fingers in my wounds and thy hand into my side, and then thou wilt believe." So to such of the 20th century the advice of Our Lord might be given. Let them go to Beupre even if possessed of not one particle of faith; let them see with their eyes and hear with their ears and the evidence of their natural senses the confidence they will see in others will modify, if not altogether change their attitude, and they will at least say, "Lord it is good for us to be here."

This year Ste. Anne was not unkindful of those who came to her for aid. The case of an Indian was one that came within my own personal knowledge. On nearing the Church on the afternoon of the eve of the feast I saw a group in front of the door. It was easy to see by the excited looks of those gathered that something out of the common had taken place, and it was not long before I was told a miracle had occurred.

In the centre of the group stood an Indian apparently under middle age and with a very intelligent cast of countenance. He was standing unaided, though one foot was enveloped in bandages as though he suffered from some grievous wound or disease. On questioning him he said that he had just been cured. His story was that he had come from Maine for the purpose of asking the assistance of Ste. Anne; that for eighteen months the maimed foot had not touched the floor, being a prey to acute erysipelas, that a few minutes before he had been cured; he had used a crutch on entering the Church, but on leaving it he had left the crutch behind him. This was substantially his statement. On asking him how he knew he was being cured he seemed unable to express himself, but a light came into his eyes and seemed to illumine his face. Seeing his inability to express an answer in words, I said to him, "you can't tell, but you know, don't you?" He at once smiled his acquiescence; next day he was seen walking up the aisles of the Church, the once sick foot encased in the long discarded boot.

Another instance was that of Daniel Hoey, a little boy about nine years of age. He had been injured when eighteen months old, and had suffered from an apparently hopeless case of spinal disease. A year ago his mother heard of Ste. Anne's and undaunted by distance or expense—her home is in Pennsylvania—she took her two youngest children, one of whom was the little boy Daniel, and set out for the shrine; before they left the child was much improved. This year she brought him again; now he is so much benefited that the support without which he was before helpless, was taken off, and now hangs as a memorial of his cure on the altar. While the mother was telling his story the little lad was jumping around with all the vivacity of the healthiest of children.

Many are said to receive favors, and like the nine lepers, go away without making known the grace that has come to them. Doubtless, if all were made public the roll would be of much greater length than is at present estimated.

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