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The Burning of The Quebec Basilica.

(By L. A. M. LOVEKIN.)

The burning of the matchless church "Old St. Paul's," London, in 1686 has been in some degree described in their diaries by both John Evelyn and the quaint chronicler Samuel Pepys. The first tells of the terrible wreck and "sad ruin" of the mighty structure, it being "rent in pieces, flakes of large stones split asunder and nothing remaining entire but the inscription in the architrave showing by whom it was built which had not one letter of it defaced!" and how the lead on the roof area "no less than six acres by measure" was totally melted.

"Thus," he writes, "lay in ashes that most venerable church, one of the most ancient pieces of ancient piety in the Christian world." With it went the record of centuries in stone.

Some half century earlier the bold navigator, Samuel Champlain, had, on behalf of France, sailed up the St. Lawrence and founded a new city and wherein was planted the Christian faith, destined to flourish and spread and grow into a goodly tree. Upon the rock on which it was founded there was destined to rise, as in London, a church that would tabernacle the records of the history of the new church and state. Not so grand perhaps as that grandest of gothic structures, "Old St. Paul's," but still a national shrine and monument, recalling great names and greater acts of heroism in deed, silent faith and self-sacrifice.

To-day the Ancient Capital has suffered a blow as great relatively as the older city and witnessed the utter destruction of its noble cathedral church, one made especially famous by its association with the sainted name of Laval. The burning of the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Priez is a catastrophe of more than local interest. It may be regarded as, of national importance for its walls, and vicinity have been closely associated with events inextricably, in a primary sense, interwoven with the

general development of the Dominion. And the world over may be found those who have travelled and, having seen, will lament the sad fate which has befallen this famous church. It was the oldest in Quebec as some previous dedications have not survived but its history is far more interesting and familiar. It was founded hard by the place where the first Canadian farmer and settler, Louis Hebert, whose name is immortalized by Herbert Street, pitched his habitation and Laval founded the Seminary. The structure was commenced in 1647 and three years later the first mass was celebrated in the progressing building, as a thank offering for continued peace with the Indians. It was designed in cruciform shape, with a nave, one hundred feet long, forty wide and a transept, but, as a writer of the times noted, with a view to future growth. It was not until the year 1686 the church was consecrated by Bishop Laval. A noble front was added, with two square towers some forty years after the foundation. The original structure was subsequently materially modified and of it Sir A. B. Roushner has written: "A century after its foundation from 1745 to 1748 the greater part of it was rebuilt and the plans furnished by M. Chaussegros de Léry. Side wings were added to it and the present side aisles were built and openings made in the walls which were arched in order to transform them into two rows of heavy pillars." During the siege of Quebec by Wolfe the church was much damaged being repaired in 1768, the sanctuary at the time of its destruction a facsimile of that at St. Peter's at Rome, enlarged and the building being placed in very much its condition at the time of the fire, two hundred and sixteen feet long and one hundred and eight wide. The front was completed in 1842, the old lantern of the 1769 period being restored on the southern tower. The cathedral, which was elevated to the status of a minor basilica in 1847, was elaborately decorated and noted for its splendid acoustic qualities alike for voice, organ or instrumentation. In this respect it was without

equal in Canada and probably farther afield. At the entrance stood two chapels and in the course of a written controversy carried on a few years ago, concerning the resting place of Samuel Champlain, a very strong case was made out for the southern one as the place of the founder's sepulchre.

While the destruction of the edifice has been a terrible misfortune viewed from the historic standpoint, it has also brought in its train the loss of some invaluable works of art. It is sufficiently well known that the Abbe Desjardins was instrumental in obtaining the transmission of a great number of paintings by the great masters to Quebec, at the French revolutionary period, their being for safe keeping. They are to-day found scattered, many of them in the great gallery at Laval University. Two paintings lost, which have long pointed the moral taught by the extremes of life, were the splendid "Crucifixion" by Van Dyke and the "Nativity" by Annabie Carrache, but the treasure most valued was a relic jealously guarded and enshrined, being a fragment of the true cross. This was given to the Church by the Abbe Desjardins and the Canadian clergy as a mark of gratitude for the help and refuge extended to the persecuted and exiled clergy of France at the period of the Reign of Terror. The church also possessed a great treasure in the form of sacred vessels, ecclesiastical robes and the like, the gifts of Kings and Queens, when the country was

still under the domination of France. These are not a total loss it is hoped. It may be assumed that the crypt and its remains will not be lost as the vaults were concreted some time ago. But they are full of historical remembrances. A tablet, up to the date of the fire, used to inform the passerby that it was to the memory of four Governors of North France whose remains had been buried in the Recollet Church but exhumed and transported to the Cathedral. This Church of the Recollet Order, it may be added, was lent for use at certain times to the Anglicans for their services in consideration of a certain toll. The Order used no stoves or heating; their guests did, with the result that they set the church on fire causing it to smoulder. The fire, which was allowed in the Cathedral and it is on record that Bishop Laval himself contracted the malady which caused his death by celebrating the midnight service. The four Governors, whose ashes rest in the crypt of the burned church were the haughty Louis de Buade, Count Frontenac, who died Nov. 28, 1683, Hector de Callieres died May 26, 1703, Philippe Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil died Oct. 10th, 1725, and Jacques Pierre de Taffanel, Marquis de la Jonquiere, died May 17, 1752. Tablets also recorded the names of many Archbishops and Bishops from the year 1740 to that of the late Cardinal Taschereau 1880. Father Beret late Superior of the Recollets 1796, and Father Cazot last Superior of the Jesuits 1800, were also honored with memorials. The body of Bishop Laval lies in the vaults of the adjoining seminary chapel. So rich was the Basilica in historic treasures that a passing reference only can, in the available space, be made to them. As already said the burning of the church can hardly be regarded as other than a national loss.

A reference to the burning of "Old St. Paul's," was made at the beginning. It may not unprofitably be noted in conclusion that, as is familiar to all, Sir Christopher Wren found an old tomb stone, in the ruins of St. Paul's which bore the solitary word "Resurgam." He adopted the word as ominous of good and a new building of grandeur rose upon the ruins of the old. So may it be with the Basilica of Quebec, and it is satisfactory to learn that copies of the original plans as drawn by the original architect are preserved. The church is extant and that the new church will be constructed in accordance with them.

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The pencil falters in my hand as I proceed to tell of Abner Lushington LeGrand, who's in a padded cell. I knew him in his younger years; when he was blithe and gay, and joyous as a yoke of steers he caroled on his way in paths obscure he plugged along, and gained a small reward, and life was all a grand sweet song with-out a minor chord. At last by chance he conquered fame and great was his renown and all the snap shot artists came from every part of town. They snapped him when he sat to eat his shredded bran repast, they shot his hat they shot his feet and made him stand agast. He couldn't cough or swear or sneeze but snapshot fans were there; they snapped the spavine on his knees, the sandbars in his hair. He couldn't dodge the fatal lens, he felt his brain contract. The snapshot fiends so stirred his wrath he tore his beard and wept; they got him coming from the bath they got him when she slept. And then his mind gave way 'twas clear his dome was on the blink; he had to shift to second gear when he would try to think. Ah, it would make one's bosom bleed to see him sunk so low; and still the snapshot fiends proceed, and picture as they go.

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A Shot-Period Comet.

The comet discovered at the Royal Observatory at the Cape by Mr. 1830 comet were portions of a big Skjellerup in May has proved unexpectedly interesting. Its orbit at first was thought to resemble that of a comet that passed perihelion in 1830, and it was suggested that it and the Skjellerup in May has proved unexpectedly interesting.

Further investigation of its elements, however, based on three observations for position at intervals of nearly a fortnight, have resulted in the determination of a quite different orbit, and one that suggests that it is the comet discovered by astronomer in New Zealand twenty years ago, which was seen only by the comet.

Should this prove correct Skjellerup's latest find has, with exception, the shortest period of revolution round the sun of any comet—about four years 189 days. The comet with the shortest period is Encke's Comet, which has a period of only three years 110 days. It has provided astronomers with a tantalizing problem by reason of the fact that it returns to perihelion at the nearest approach to the sun—about two hours earlier than it should according to the law of gravitation. This causes its orbit slowly to contract, a phenomenon which must ultimately result in its falling into the sun. It has been suggested that in perihelion part of its orbit the comet encounters a swarm of meteoroids or some other resisting medium which brings about the observed acceleration of its period. If this is so, Skjellerup's Comet may be similarly affected, and for this reason its appearances will be anxiously awaited to see if its period is subject to the same mysterious acceleration as that of Encke.

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MUTT AND JEFF

ISN'T JEFF THE LIMIT?

By Bud Fisher

