



OLD FRENCH BATTERY IN POINT PLEASANT PARK, HALIFAX.
(See page 77.)

AMONG THE BLUENOSES.

RHEIMS CATHEDRAL.

"As far as the spiritual character of the period overpowers the artist and finds expression in his work, so far it will always retain a certain grandeur, and will represent to future beholders the Unknown, the Inevitable, the Divine."—EMERSON.

The traveller, now-a-days, in pleasant France, is far too apt, after he has "done" Paris, to put himself into an express train, whirl through the wine country, close his eyes on smoky Lyons, and open them upon the bluest of seas. It is Paris that misleads him. The Revolution, the Empire, the Republic, have so destroyed or changed the Paris of old, that, in spite of the ancient landmarks yet remaining, the general effect is one of brightness and newness. Everything sparkles, and not least the crowds that flit past him on the boulevards, or sit sipping their *café noir* and *absinthe*. If he is an artist or a poet he may go by way of contrast, when he leaves it, to one of the charming out-of-the-way nooks in Normandy or on the Breton coast, or seek one of the other historic cities where change has not been so rife. If he is but the average human being of five senses, ten to one the epicureanism in the air enters into his soul and sends him to the epicurean's home—the shore of the Mediterranean.

You and I are artists and poets, of course (although this perverse generation does not always buy our pictures or publish our rhymes), and as we are fresh from the shrines of our own country, let us make a pilgrimage to one of the most renowned shrines of this. France, as you know, is the birth-place of Gothic architecture—many believe that nowhere but in France did it reach perfection, and the cathedral of Notre Dame at Rheims is the flower of the best period of Gothic.

The old walled city where sprang up this flower is ninety-nine miles from Vesle, a tributary of the Aisne. The circle of forts, remaining from the time of the Franco-Prussian war, gives it rather the appearance of a camp, and spoils, to some extent, the picturesqueness of the vine-clad hills to the south and west. The wall has eleven gates, of

which that named under is the most interesting, having close to it the old Roman gate—a triple triumphal arch, covered with bas-reliefs, now unintelligible. The cathedral is on the site of an older building, which itself replaced one still more ancient—the Basilian, in which Clovis and the principal lords of his court were baptised by St. Remigius in 464, after the battle of Tolbias. Philip Augustus was consecrated at Rheims in 1179, as were all the succeeding kings of France until 1830—with the exception of Henry IV., who was consecrated at Chartres; Napoleon, who was consecrated at Paris, and Louis XVIII., who was not consecrated at all. At the revolution of 1830 the ceremony was abolished.

The cathedral is in the interior 480 feet long by 99 feet wide, with a transept, or *croisée*, of 160 feet. The height of the roof is 117 feet, that of the towers 267. Though built in the thirteenth century, the facade is mainly of the fourteenth. In the fifteenth century a fire destroyed the roof and spires; the latter were never fully restored.

As the exquisite carvings show, the church was built when Gothic sculpture, as well as Gothic architecture, was in its prime. A cathedral was the Gothic sculptor's block; the Bible and the legends of the saints were his subjects; without and within, on parts seen and on parts unseen, carving was lavished with equal care. The facade is a perfect gallery of statues, thirty-four of which are life-size. In the reliefs within the tympanums of the door, the picturesque tendency of Gothic sculpture comes out strongly. The Coronation of the Virgin is the central scene; on the right we have Christ Enthroned; on the left Christ Crucified. The statues at the sides of the main portal are arranged in groups that remind us of the "Santa Conversazione" of Italian painting. No violent action is expressed, but a graceful gesture or a turn of the head suggests their relation to each other. St. Gabriel kneels to the Blessed Virgin, and Isaac to Abraham; Zacharias stretches forth his arms to receive the Infant Jesus. Among the

most striking pictures is one of Christ, on the central pillar of the third portal. Small angels are placed upon the buttresses of the choir-chapels; larger ones in the baldachinos. At the eastern end of the church is the Angel Tower, 59 feet above the roof, surmounted by a ball, on which stands an angel nearly eight feet high. Over the principal portal is a magnificent rose-window.

The interior is very striking, from the length of the nave, the richness of the thirteenth century stained glass, the coloured marbles of the choir, and the profusion of the carving. The Roman tomb of Jovinus, who was consul, A. D. 366,—a solid block of white marble with bas-relief—reminds us that Rheims was the *Durscortorum* of the Romans, mentioned by Cæsar, in whose time it was the capital of the Remi, one of the most considerable nations of Belgic Gaul. Other treasures are paintings by Titian and Tintoretto; and Poussin's masterpiece—Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet. There are tapestries of gorgeous colourings, given in the 16th century by the Cardinal of Lorraine; and in the right transept two magnificent pieces of gobelins, executed from Raphael's designs. To me the most interesting of the treasures (for there are fine pictures and tapestries elsewhere) is the Reliquary of the Sacred Phial, in which was kept the oil with which the Kings of France were anointed—that unheroic one included who owed his crown to the Maid of Orleans. The Phial itself disappeared during the Revolution.

Mediaeval architecture and mediæval philosophy have been alike deplored as "a waste and prodigality of power." There are worse philosophers than the Schoolmen; and "waste" and "prodigality" are strange terms to be used in connection with temples for the Living God. When we, like the middle ages, and like another builder long before their day, scorn to offer to the Lord "of that which doth cost us nothing," the roof that covers the hearth will not so often tower above the roof that covers the altar. A Gothic cathedral, the growth of days when symbolism was the universal language is much more than a material offering to God. It is a creed in stone.

A. M. MACLEOD.