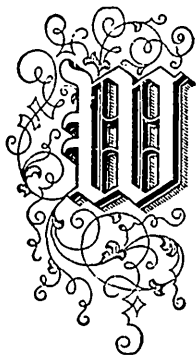


ST. BENOIT-JOSEPH RETREAT.

"Its rocks rise like statues, tall, stately and fair,
And the trees, and the flowers, and the mountain, and air,
With wonder's soul near you,
To share with, and cheer you,
Make Paradise there."



WHENEVER I read those lines of Thos. Davis I am reminded of a spot on the banks of the St. Lawrence, about five miles from Montreal; and whenever I see that spot I am reminded of those lines of the "Minstrel of

Mallow." Leaving behind us the clash and bustle, the dust and smoke, the eternal hurry and clatter of the commercial metropolis, we emerge, tired and weary with the strife of daily struggles, into the almost absolute repose that seems like the fabled Halcyon to hover about this delightful place. Seated upon a rock and gazing upon the giant sweep of the great water below one feels a new life, while the flood itself is an image unalterable of life. There, of a summer evening, one might forcibly recall that picture in Chateaubriand's "Genius of Christianity," when he speaks of "the sun setting slowly in the West, the moon rising calmly in the East, immensity above us and immensity below; it would seem as if the Almighty were bending over the abyss, staying the sinking sun with one hand, raising the trembling moon with the other, and lending, through all space, an attentive ear to the suppliant voice of his creatures." Far away to the north the blue and distant Laurentians fringe the horizon and intermingle with the clouds of heaven; off to the south-east the evening star, sole one of the celestial throng yet visible, hangs over the huge head of Belœil—like Coleridge's vision of dawn in the vale of Chamouni. South-west rises the glittering spire of Longueuil's magnificent temple, scintillating in the departing rays, and rising an emblem of existence—crushing with its ponderous base the enmities of life and pointing, with its cross-capt summit, to the regions of peace and eternal love. Around and far away, stretch fer-

tile fields, broad acres, wooded hills and verdant vales, dotted with cozy cottages or more conspicuously marked by wealthy homesteads. Away down the river, from between the hamlet of Varennes and the Church of Pointe-aux-Trembles, rises a column of smoke; approaching slowly but surely, like Israel's pillar of old, it towers into the amber air. It is from the funnel of an ocean steamer—majestically the huge courier of the deep ascends until all its grand proportions stand out distinctly defined against the sky. From a little distance comes wafted on the evening breeze, the refrain of the raftsmen's song, and still more sweetly falls the toll of the Angelus from the silver-like bell of Boucherville's pretty church. Well might Moore have sung of this scene:—

"I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curl'd,
Above the tall elms that a cottage was near:
And I thought, if there's peace to be found in this world,
For the heart that is humble, it surely is here!"

Although the ubiquitous genius of progressive civilization—as moderns call it—has not yet marred the scene nor disturbed its holy repose, still the angel of Christian charity has spread its wings over the place and beneath their shelter a glorious institution has sprung into existence—an institution destined some day with proper encouragement—to prove a boon to the country and a source of blessings to its inhabitants. There are some whose ideas of civilization are identical with carpets and cut glass, fine masonry and the steam-engine; but there is another standard more lasting whereby the thoughtful measure the strides of a nation's advancement. Along the highway of progress the institutions, educational, charitable and religious, are the milestones that indicate the march of progress. It is a people's duty to preserve and guard them where they are to be found, and to establish and foster them where the field is yet unoccupied.