

CONCERNING THE RÉCOLLETS.

After an interval of eighty-eight years, the habit and hood of the sons of St. Francis of Assisi, are again seen in the streets of a Canadian town, as the Rev. Père Frederic de Gayvelde, or his socius the good Frere Lazare, walk through the city of Three Rivers on business connected with their important mission.

Some eight or nine years ago, Rev. Père Frederic, then assistant superior of the Franciscans, who are custodians of the sanctuaries, or sacred spots of the Holy Land, came to our country to collect the amount which the alms given by the Faithful on Good Friday had provided towards the object to which his life is consecrated.

Again in the spring of the current year, this Reverend Father arrived in Canada, this time to remain, as Commissary for the Holy Land, his place of residence being fixed at Three Rivers.

Monseigneur Lasbèche having deeded to the Franciscans a small tract of land at the back of the Seminary grounds, it is Father Frederic's intention to erect thereon a modest dwelling for himself and his brother monk. In the meantime, these sons of St. Francis are the honoured guests of the Parish of St. Marie Magdeleine du Cap.

Their costume is not quite the same as was that of their brethren the Récollets. The latter wore a grey habit with a black hood or capuchin, while Father Frederic is clothed from head to foot in brown—I have written 'from head to foot' by force of habit, whereas, in fact, neither head nor foot of the poor father has any covering whatever,—the fringe of his shaven crown being entirely at the mercy of the winds of heaven, while his bare feet shiver on their inhospitable leathern sandals.

Among the many objects which he finds worthy of admiration in this Canada of ours, Father Frederic places foremost our river steamers. To stand on the boulevard at Three Rivers and watch one of these 'water palaces,' as he terms them, all decked with many coloured lights, floating off upon a July evening for a moonlight sail upon Lake St. Peter, is to the good father a source of mixed delight and sorrow—for beautiful as is the vessel in gala attire, and sweet as are the harmonious sounds resounding from her deck—still a 'moonlight excursion' is not a very edifying class of entertainment, and, moreover, is one upon which the Curé of Three Rivers has placed his veto.

Apropos of the sons of St. Francis, here is a very good anecdote which I came across to-day in an old number of *La Revue Canadienne*. It is related by that enchanting writer, M. Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, in his paper on the Récollets. Speaking of the last Superior of that Order in Canada, the Rev. Père de Bérey, M. de Gaspé says:—

The Duke of Kent had received an invitation to dine with the Rev. Père de Bérey at noon, that being the hour of closing the parade, which was held opposite to the Convent of the Récollets, on what is to-day the site of our little square with its pretty fountain.

Père de Bérey, who had been chaplain to a regiment, and had even been wounded while administering the sacraments to the dying upon a battle-field, had tastes and habits of a somewhat military order.

He bore a slight resemblance to the brave French officer who, after many years of service, had exchanged his uniform for a soutane, and who, when an oath escaped him, never failed to add, while lowering his eyes: "As I should have said when I was a colonel of dragoons."

I do not mean to imply that Père du Bérey went so far as the ex-colonel, but only that he was somewhat military in his tastes and habits.

Accordingly, on the appointed day, wishing to offer a fitting reception to the son of his sovereign, he had arranged a small park of artillery—a real triumph of mechanism, which should go off just as mid-day rang, and at the moment of the arrival of the Prince and his aides-de-camps.

These little cannons were of pewter or lead, and were mounted on neat frames, and were the work of one of the brothers of the convent.

Whether the Prince (who was a great martinet, and who, according to an expression of the soldiers of his regiment, used often in summer to *faire la bacchanale* in their barracks at three

o'clock in the morning, to stir up the lazy with a vigorous supply of blows from a cane) whether the Prince had had enough of discipline for one day, or whether it was owing to some other motive, certain it is that he shortened the parade to twenty minutes, and withdrew into the convent, followed by his aides-de-camp. Père de Bérey, taken by surprise, and in despair at not having been able to shew off his piece of artillery at the moment when the Prince entered by the main door of the convent, Père de Bérey, as explosive as gunpowder itself, exclaimed in a rough tone:

"My Lord, we surprise only our enemies; I thought your Highness too strict in the matter of discipline to shorten a parade so as to make an unexpected assault upon a peaceable convent!"

The Duke, when the cause of the wrath of the son of St. Francis was explained to him, could not refrain from a hearty fit of laughter.

Père de Bérey, who had no mind that the money which his gallantry had cost him should be entirely wasted, at the end of dessert asked the Prince's permission to drink his Royal Highness' health, and as he pronounced the words:—"Gentlemen, to His Highness the Duke of Kent," a formidable detonation of artillery close to the door of the refectory, caused the windows of that apartment to vibrate.

Some persons have censured the last superior of the Récollets as being too much of a courtier, forgetting that as a scion of a noble French family he found himself at home in the society which he had frequented since his infancy, and that, if in English drawing-rooms his men's habit and hood exposed him to ridicule, still, his dignified carriage, his extensive knowledge, and his keen wit, that was both subtle and sarcastic, rendered him an opponent not to be attacked with impunity.

He even dined at the English officers' mess, where his sallies, his jokes, and his lively repartee were greatly appreciated.

The Père de Bérey was born in Montreal, on the 10th June, 1720, and was the son of Francois de Bérey, Sieur des Essarts, an officer in the French Army.

He was baptized Claude Charles, but assumed the name of Felix at his ordination on the 21st December, 1743.

From the month of August, 1763, to the month of October, 1767, he was curé of Chambly. He also ministered to the parish of St. Francois du Lac. In 1796, he became commissary, provincial and last Superior of the Franciscans in Canada.

He died on the 18th May, 1800, at the age of eighty years, and was buried in the Cathedral, in the chapel of Our Lady of Pity. For all of which information we must thank the invaluable book of Mgr. Tanguay.

If Mgr. Tanguay's dates are correct, Père de Bérey's tenure of the office of Superior was not of lengthy duration, as in the autumn of 1796 the community was dissolved, owing to the (in all probability) not quite accidental destruction of their convent and church by fire.

"One month after this disaster," says M. de Gaspé, there were scarcely three Capuchins to be found in the town of Quebec. The sons of St. Francis, dispersed throughout the colony, were peaceably earning their living like other citizens. Such of the monks as had made a course of studies, the Frère Lyonnais for instance, took the soutane and were ordained priests; those who had a sufficiently good education taught schools, the others sought occupation in trade or agriculture. Strange to say, the poisonous tongue of calumny never sought to tarnish the reputation of these virtuous men.

The government at once took possession of the site and ruins of their convent, and a few days after the disaster, buildings in which were sold all descriptions of liquor were erected in their beautiful orchard. Père de Bérey was, however, fairly treated by the conquerors, who allowed him a pension of two thousand dollars.

The last relic of the old Franciscans of Quebec was the celebrated elm, the "orme des Récollets" about which was woven many a legend. Some went so far as to assert that Jacques Cartier, on his first landing at Quebec, established himself with his fellow voyagers beneath its inviting shade. All maintained its existence for a period of over two hundred years, which estimate may easily be credited, as it measured fourteen feet and one inch in circumference.

The numerous antiquarians of Quebec protected with love