

MONTREAL TO QUEBEC BY STEAMER.

THREE RIVERS, DESCHAMBAULT, POINTE AUX TREMBLES AND ST. AUGUSTIN.

II.

Let us bid adieu to Sulte's quaint, native city. On sped, under the veil of night, our good steamer, successively shooting past innumerable beacons and headlands, each with a story of its own in Canadian annals. Pine-clad Cape Lauzon, of old charts, now Deschambault, half way between Three Rivers and Quebec. Tradition has handed down sad tales of the luckless New Englanders hurrying home during the inauspicious winter of 1775-6 from their rash invasion of Canada, dropping down exhausted as they trudged over the snowdrifts at Deschambault, victims of smallpox or dysentery, their stiffened remains thrust unconfined in holes dug in orchards and whitened meadows on the wayside. The place teems also with the warlike memories of 1759.

Deschambault, until the Grand Trunk Railway in 1853 monopolised the winter traffic and passengers of the Red and Blue Lines of stages, was a noted mid-day halting-place for them; the tired roadsters had a rest and feed; the travellers their dinner at the wayside inn, and new relays were ordered. The antique Deschambault Manor of yore, the cherished summer retreat of Chief-Justice Sir James Stuart, Bart., is now owned by a distinguished Canadian, *littérateur* and sportsman, George M. Fairchild, Jr., the originator of the Canadian Club at New York.

We next headed with a full pressure of steam for Pointe-aux-Trembles, and heard at the early dawn the whistle of the little market steamer Etoile. This parish, one of the oldest on the shore of the St. Lawrence, is fringed with low, fertile meadows, with a background of lofty heights, studded with orchards and graceful elms. During the great siege several encounters took place between the English and French forces. Wolfe, Murray, Levis, Dumas were once familiar names to the peasantry of Pointe-aux-Trembles.

A party of 1,200 of Fraser's Highlanders and Grenadiers, says Panet, were despatched to Pointe-aux-Trembles under General Wolfe in person, under the guidance of Major Robert Stobo,* on the 21st of July, 1759, and captured a number of Quebec French ladies, who had sought a refuge there during the bombardment. The English were fired on by about 40 Indians; but succeeded about half-past three in the morning, having surrounded the houses round the church, in capturing about thirteen ladies. The fair captives were Mesdames Couillard, Duchesnay, De Charney, with her mother and her sister. The Joly, Malhot and Maynau families formed part of them. They were treated with every kind of respect. Young General Wolfe headed the detachment under the guidance of Major Robert Stobo, who, it seems, made several pretty speeches to the ladies—"qui a fait biens des compliments."

"What was worse," remarks Panet, "was that whilst the British soldiery did them no harm, the Indians (allies of the French) pillaged the houses and property of nearly all these unfortunate refugees."—(Panet's "Journal of the Siege," p. 13.)—"Each captive for the day bore the name of her captor."

It sounds odd that it should have seemed necessary to detail 1,200 British Grenadiers, etc., to capture thirteen French ladies. One likes to recall this romantic incident in the career of Miss Lowther's admirer, James Wolfe—the chivalrous gallantry of the young soldier towards beauty in distress. Next day the fair Quebeckers were brought home in boats and landed at Ance des Mères at 3 p.m., orders having been sent by the General to the English fleet to stop firing on the city until 9 p.m., in order to afford the captives time, after their release, to retire to a place of safety. Who was on that 21st of July, 1759, Madame Wolfe, Madame Stobo or Madame Frazer? What a lark for the sons of Mars to enliven their next home letters?

At Pointe-aux-Trembles occurred during the spring of 1760 the engagement between the French frigates with an overwhelming portion of the British fleet, brave Captain de Vauclain, of the Atlantic, winning by his spirited, though unsuccessful defence, the respect of worthy foes.

The next headland is the bluff at the mouth of the roaring Jacques Cartier stream, where frowned the grim old fort of that name. There bivouacked, on the 14th of September, 1759, the routed French legions. The ditches round the vanished fortress are still visible.

Not very far, lower down, is a lurking boulder, visible at half tide, known to this day as *La Roche à Jacques Cartier*. A vague, unreliable tradition, goes on to say that one of the vessels of the great Saint Malo captain struck and was wrecked on this treacherous, hidden rock.

So soon as rosy-fingered Aurora had oped the portals of the east, I was up and pacing the deck of the steamer, when a famous *raconteur*, M. G. M. F.—, accosted me, and, pointing to the faint outline of the old Grist Mill, on the bank of the river, and to the *Calvaire* close by, dating from 1697, he asked me if I could notice on the beach any remains of the first church at St. Augustin.

"Did you," he added, "ever hear the story of the great black horse who carted the greater portion of the stone for the foundation wall of the first church or chapel of St. Augustin? This was, as you may be aware, a wooden structure, built at L'Ance à Maheut, about ten acres from the main road, in 1690, on the beach. The second church

dates 1720, some distance from the first; the present one, a comparatively recent structure."

On my replying in the negative, he lit his cigar and said:

"Two centuries back, where you now see round here water a fathom and more at light tide, was dry land. The population formed a mission—the mission of La Côte Saint Ange. A notable portion of the settlers in primitive Canada were originally from Normandy. Normans are famous for their love of lawsuits. There must have been several located here, judging from their cantankerous disposition when the site and size of the future chapel was mooted. One faction wanted the place of worship to be just large enough for the settlement at L'Ance à Maheut without a steeple. The opposition, a progressive body with an eye to the future, insisted on a larger building with a lofty steeple, and a cross surmounted by a cock—the Gallic cock of course.

"After several noisy conclaves of the notables, the steeple was carried, but the cross and cock were dropped on the score of expenditure. It was remarked that the loudest in denouncing the emblem of Christianity, as unnecessary expense, was a colonist recently arrived from Paris, a swarthy fellow, whose visage was covered with a heavy bluish beard, wearing a black velvet *justaucorps*. However, he spoke loud and fluently, and was evidently a man of some means, as he had ridden to the meeting on horseback, but had refused to dismount, alleging that his steed, a coal black, fiery Norman roadster, would not stand unattended, and that he alone could master him. The animal, it was remarked, was very restless, and wore a species of spiked, double bridle, which the rider jocosely remarked had not been removed for a year and a day. The mysterious stranger spoke so fair and seemed to enter so readily in the all absorbing project of church building, that it required but few arguments on his part to have his offer accepted, when he tendered for the cartage of all the stone required for the foundation walls.*

"The agreement, a very concise one, was jotted down on a sheet of birch bark by the scribe of the settlement, who counted on being chosen beadle of the future parish. He was a jolly, fat fellow, and boasted of having already found an appropriate name for the fiery, black horse, whom he christened, on account of his sleek, shiny, satin-like coat, 'Satan,' playing on the words. The *Seigneur* and father of the settlement, on being asked to become a party to the contract and to affix his signature thereto, drew forth from its scabbard the short sword which the French king's retainers usually wore, not, however, with any evil intent, but to use the point in writing his mark, a cross (X), on the book. This made Satan's owner wince, but the feudal magnate heeded him not, telling the scribe to add the usual closing formula—"Et le dit seigneur en sa qualité de gentilhomme a déclaré ne savoir signer."

"The very next day at sunrise (the nine-hour day's work was not yet in fashion), Satan, suitably harnessed to a rude *charrette*, made his appearance, led by his master.

"What a worry for the poor beast, every one exclaimed, that heavy spiked double bridle must be when he is to be fed or watered? Why, one would imagine it was never intended to be removed? There was evidently something strange, sinister, verging on the mystery about the whole turnout? How Satan did paw the earth, show his long, white teeth, put down close to his head his delicately formed ears, as if in a chronic stage of rage, when strangers approached him?

It became an established fact that the bridle was to remain as tight as possible on the animal when he was brought at noon to get a drink from a neighbouring spring. A late incident left no doubt on this point, else there would be trouble. On a recent occasion, when the farmers around had assembled, on their way home, at noon, to repeat the *Angelus*, close to the spot where the *Calvaire* was erected, in 1798, and to water the horses, Satan, being led, like the rest, to the refreshing draught, a peasant said to his master: "Why don't you remove his bridle and give him a chance to drink comfortably?"

To which the mysterious stranger replied with an emphatic "No," and the peasant, still pressing him, was met with a dreadful oath, uttered by Satan's master, "*Tors mon âme au boît d'un piquet.*"[†] However, as this last feat rested merely on the *ipse dixit* of a superstitious old crone, Satan and his owner were allowed to proceed, unmoled, with the contract, though the future beadle on noticing the huge boulders carted by Satan, without any apparent effort, had openly stated to the *Seigneur*—crossing himself—"C'est le Diable! 'Tis the Devil!"

The beadle's daughter, a rosy-cheeked, romping lass, had secretly told her mother a curious story about the strange contractor, adding, though she liked him: "*Ça paraît être un beau mâsieur, mais j'en ai peur.*"[‡] Bravely, however, was the work going on for a full week; so rapidly, in fact, that the contractor drew in advance a large portion of the price agreed on. On the following Saturday, just when all except himself were preparing to kneel to repeat the *Angelus*, the future beadle, out of pure cussedness, though some said it was through curiosity—while Satan's master, who had just pocketed a whole week's instalment in advance, was, with his back turned, paying a gallant compliment to the beadle's blooming daughter—led Satan to the well, tugged and pulled at the double bridle until he succeeded in

*The reader desirous of obtaining fuller particulars of the erection of the early churches at St. Augustin, County of Portneuf, are referred to my "Album du Touriste," pp. 112-3-4, and foot notes thereon.

†A picturesque expletive in frequent use by the old *voyageurs des pays d'en haut*.

slipping it off, when lo and behold! Satan disappeared in a cloud of blue flame and sulphur smoke. . . . Endless were the lawsuits and discord which followed; of course, all caused by the interference of the devil in church matters.

"Well, Mr. F.—, this is a capital story. I was going to observe how risky it is to unbridle a spirited horse when brought out to make him drink; but you want me to believe that, as a fact, *Diabolus* has occasionally interfered in church matters, in Canada as well as elsewhere."

From the deck of the steamer we could discern, canopied by the green woods, on the lofty river bank at St. Augustin, the long, mossy white house, where the historian of Canada, Frs. X. Garneau, was born on the 13th June, 1809.[†]

I recollect my dear old friend once relating to me how Louis Garneau, his aged sire, had told him the thrilling account of the encounter which, as a boy, in 1760, he had witnessed from the verandah of this old tenement, between the *Atalante*, commanded by brave Captain de Vauclain (so ungratefully requited on his return to France for his life-long devotion to the interest of the French king) with English men-of-war.

A short distance lower down we steamed past the lugubrious ledge, visible at low tide, where, on the 22nd June, 1857, at about 5 p.m., the ill-fated old steamer *Montreal*, on her daily trip from Quebec, loaded with Irish emigrants, in flames from bow to stern, was beached as a last resort. Two hundred of her despairing passengers, with some well remembered Quebeckers, attempting to swim from the burning craft, were that day consigned to a watery grave, within hail of the shore, one of the most heartrending among the many marine disasters which darken our annals.

On we sped, in the cool of the early morn, whilst the orb of day poured its purple light over one of the most enchanting river views on the continent, localities for ever enshrined in early Canadian history—Cap Rouge and its lofty bluff where Jacques Cartier and Roberval wintered more than three and a half centuries ago. The green banks of Sillery Cove, where, in 1657, existed the Jesuit mission house, amidst the Algonquin and Montagnais wigwams. Convent Cove, where, for three and a half years, piously ministered to the spiritual and temporal wants of their neophytes the *Hospitalières* (Hotel Dieu) nuns, until incessant Iroquois alarms forced them back to Quebec on the 29th May, 1644.

On we sped, past the little monument erected by the inhabitants of Sillery and consecrated on 26th June, 1870, to the memory of Commander Noël Brulart de Sillery, a Knight of Malta—the munificent founder of the settlement—sacred also to the memory of good Father Ennimon Massé, the first missionary of Canada, peaceably resting since the 12th May, 1646, under the chancel of his little chapel of St. Michael, whose walls are now raised level with the shore, but whose foundations are still perceptible under the sod a few yards south of the monument. In rear, on the opposite side of the road, still stands with its massive walls three feet thick, transformed into a school house, the Jesuits' former residence, known to the inhabitants as "The Manor"—the oldest house in Canada, dating back to 1637.

As the boat shot past we caught a glimpse, among the trees mantling the Sillery heights, of Clermont, erected there in 1850 by the late Hon. R. E. Caron, one of our most respected administrators, now the ornate home of Lt.-Col. Ferdinand Turnbull, Inspector of our Dominion Cavalry. It adjoins Beauvoir, whose extensive conservatories and vinerias are not in view from the river.

Soon loomed out lofty Pointe-à-Pizeau, once a famous trysting place for the Red Man. The handsome St. Columba church, like a diadem, now crowns the historic old point since 1854.

Close by, in St. Michael's Cove, stood, in 1841, Monsieur Pierre Puisseaux's sumptuous abode, where the founder of Montreal, Chomedy de Maisonneuve, Mdle. Mance, with the soldiers and farmers, colonists for Montreal, found a roof to shelter them during the winter of 1642.[†]

We were rapidly drawing near the indentation in the shore, at the foot of Marchmont Hill—now named after the conquering hero of the Heights of Abraham, Wolfe's Cove—where the British Grenadiers and Scotch Highlanders were silently mustering at dawn on the 13th September, 1759, for assault.

A few more revolutions of the paddles and the steamer, having passed inside of the Fly Bank, was creeping leisurely along the decayed wharves and half submerged piers, close to the precipice where luckless Brigadier-General Richard Montgomery's conquering career was arrested for ever. "HERE FELL MONTGOMERY" was inscribed in white letters on a black board, attached to the rock sufficiently high above to be read from the deck of river craft. Five minutes more and our trusty steamer, taking a sheer, was rounding out—within full view of Orleans' verdant isle, four miles distant—to her berth at the Napoleon wharf.

I quitted the saloon of the steamer after exchanging a friendly nod with her genial old commander, Capt. Nelson, trying to treasure in as many as possible of the glorified memories of the past, associated with the noble expanse of water just travelled over. From the haunted halls of

† "Mon vieil aieul, courbé par l'âge, assis sur la galerie de sa longue maison blanche, perchée au sommet de la butte qui domine la vieille église de Saint-Augustin, nous montrait, de sa main tremblante, le théâtre du combat naval de l'*Atalante* avec plusieurs vaisseaux anglais, combat dont il avait été témoin dans son enfance. Il aimait raconter comment plusieurs de ses oncles avaient péri dans des luttes héroïques de cette époque, et à nous rappeler le nom des lieux où s'étaient livrés une partie de ces glorieux combats restés dans ses souvenirs."
Biographie de F. X. Garneau, par l'abbé H. R. Casgrain.

‡ "Une maison regardée dans les temps comme le bijou du Canada."
—The gem of Canada.

*Major R. Stobo, who had been for three years a prisoner of war in Quebec, was well acquainted with its environs.