

in the midst of America—the symbol for all that is new and transitory.

Who knows, but, in Quebec, is being kept alive an idyllic life such as history has curiously preserved in all ages in certain parts of almost every continent?

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The roads of rural Quebec still support by the wayside huge uplifted wooden crosses from which the flame of "the sacred heart" leaps forth to bless the passer-by. Similar crosses marked the highways of England in the good old days, and even now a few remain in certain parts of the North, historic landmarks of both sacred and profane history. In Quebec the crosses are bound up with the history of Canada, the originals being set up before there were any churches in the land.

Quebecers realize that Canada has no more precious or artistic heirloom than these wayside crosses, for every now and again one happens on one which has been repaired and furnished with new symbols—nails, crown, ladder, spear, etc., carved by the farmer whose place it happens to adjoin.

ANOTHER interesting landmark of a more modern and utilitarian order are the enormous black cauldrons, hanging above a fireplace of huge field stones, seen in nearly every yard. In these pots the women take much comfort, putting them to many uses requiring large quantities of boiling water. On washing day the cauldron with its merry bubble and song, strikes terror to the dirt in a hundred pieces, as it sits squarely above the leaping flames and smoke of the crackling log-fire. At other times the pot is used for dyeing wool-yarn or for making soap. Soap-making and dyeing as well as spinning, weaving, churning and hay-making or other light gardening, being among the habitant woman's accomplishments.

There is only one drawback to the average visitor in these parts—that is the language. But even if your French is limited, such is the natural grace of the Quebec women that your inability to express yourself freely but gives them another opportunity to serve you by their patience; and it makes an added bond if you have to have recourse to paper and pencil to make your meaning clear. Your drawings or the French word written, creates an understanding expressed in a cordial "Ou aye" on their part and much laughter on yours.

When you drop into the homemade swing-seat which stands invitingly in every farm-house yard, Madame noting your exhaustion, sends a little daughter to you with a glass of milk, some cake and doughnuts on a tray, beseeching as a favour that you accept of what she modestly calls her "plain fare." At another place, if you happen to be driving, a little maid runs out to your carriage and offers you freshly picked strawberries or raspberries or other fruits of her labours and journeyings into the fields and woods. All in exchange for a few cents.

A very industrious and thrifty people, they have retained all the sweet old-world hospitality which lifts life out of the prosaic every-day rut. Into this ideal life the daily newspaper seldom or never comes, unless brought by some casual visitor like ourselves. Here, as elsewhere, in other parts of Canada and the United States, the average farm-family is too occupied with the business of the farm from early morning till late at night to care much about the world outside, even in its own cities of Quebec and Montreal. There is no circulating free library either, in any of the large cities to which they could send for books on any subject. They cannot buy books because it would mean a railroad or steam-boat journey to reach the book-store.

That they would read, is proven, by the studious way they pore over the illustrated catalogues of firms doing a mail-order business. Once, for two weeks, I read an Eaton catalogue every evening with a family gathered about its living-room table in a remote region of Cape Breton, and I've always felt those evenings were well-spent. Together we learned a great many new words, how to spell them, etc., and got much pleasure out of the illustrations. I saw one Quebec lad, resting his head on his hands, studying one of these catalogues as concentratedly

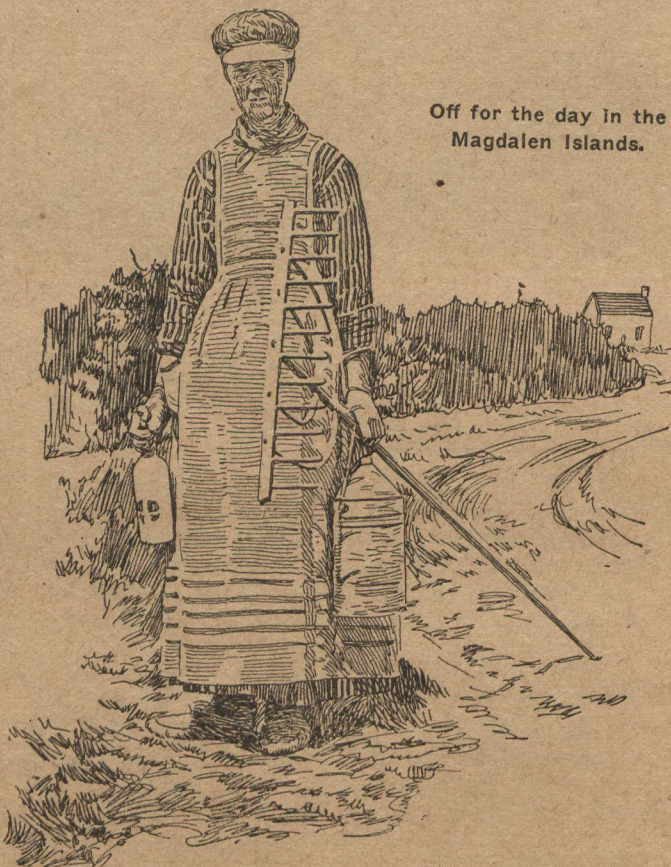
as though it had been some absorbing novel.

In the remote islands of Ste. Pierre et Miquelon and in the West Indies, the Cable Companies or the Governor issues a news-sheet every morning, and it is pinned up in the Post Office or some other prominent place where "the people," those who never see a newspaper at all, as well as those who see one only at stated intervals, may gather to read it. High and low, rich and poor, black and white, gather about these "news sheets," and their contents are the talk of the town.

Those news sheets of Nassau fire the public mind. The boys at their play—play world games! They dig the trenches of Europe on the coral sands of the island beaches. They make cannon balls and decoy the enemy with bits of gulf weed and rushes, into a belief that there is no trench. And then there is the unexpected opening of artillery followed by the rush of a storming party and dead Germans line the beach in no time!

In Quebec we do not see children playing "war." They would not know how to go about it. Canada has not supplied them with a news sheet! So it is not the children's fault if they do not "play the game."

The things that Quebecers know—they know well! In no other part of Canada do the farm women maintain such a high all-round standard. They



are free from "the melancholy of discontent" which so often assails the dweller in the country parts. Personal neatness is one of her strong points. A tousled or dishevelled woman is indeed a rare thing among the French habitant. Who, one and all, are gifted with that talent peculiar to the daughters of France wherever found—the ability to make something pretty, useful and artistic to wear, out of the least promising material. No part of Quebec Province could be more remote than the Madeleine Islands, and yet the bedspreads woven by the island women are perfect works of art both in designs and blending of shades. These women are not satisfied that it is a "couvert" which she makes, it must be pleasing to work upon. With the same deft fingers the woman of Quebec takes a bit of coarse black cloth and makes a hat with the aid of a flower or a dash of ribbon somewhere—a hat that would cost a fortune if bought in the city.

THE garments which the habitant women make are in their way, all things considered, as much "creations" as those turned out by her sister in Paris. And in this the habitant women of French-Canada have few superiors. You look about, and there in the garden propping up the wood-pile is a tree-stump inverted on a stick, the roots forming the antlers for the deer's head and face which a few

skilful cuts with a jack-knife has whittled into a life-like resemblance! Her chicken coops are not merely "a box." She cuts an end and gives the box—a roof; she converts it by a series of skilful turns and twists into a little "maison" with perhaps a balcony such as runs around her own home.

So with her culinary skill. When at mid-day the husband comes in tired from the haying he finds the "soup," on which every French family exists, whether here or in France, savoury and hot; he finds the onions peeled, the great loaf on the table and the doughnuts or cake and cream or berries and cream ready.

How the women find time for it all and when they do it is a mystery. For owing to their natural thrift they have a wonderful talent for arranging their work in such order that they themselves never appear hurried or over-worked or behind-hand. You sit down on a comfortable homemade chair; the bare boards of the floor are white from frequent scrubblings; the tapis is neat and unobtrusive; the homemade table holds the half-knitted sock; in the deep windows flowers are blooming. Outside are the long French barns, the woodpile, the spring house, roaming chickens, raucous-voiced geese and grunting porkers, while waving grain fields spread away to the woods and the mountains, losing themselves in the wilderness of the north. The whole thing, from the woman's sweet face, to the purple mist of the distant mountains, is one perfect picture of the most idyllic life in all America.

THAT the life of French-Canada is as distinct as it is, after three hundred years would point to the fact it contains somewhere the elements which keep it a strong and separate people. If you have had the privilege of going into both the big cities and the remotest regions of the Province of Quebec you must have felt above all things else a wonderful strength and sincerity in the life of the people; a feeling that in their slow growth there is a tremendous sense of security; the security and quiet force of a people destined from the beginning to keep alive and to securely weld into Canadian national life some of its finest traditions, a real art life, a sweet gentleness, a natural economy and a deft-fingered creative ability.

In keeping these things alive Quebec is doubtless fulfilling her destiny and the nation's. It is a mistake to think we were all made to serve in the same way, in this or any other emergency. Mothers who hang over the cradle in Quebec are rearing families that shall, with the increase of cattle, sheep and pigs, the father is raising this year in numbers never before paralleled in the history of the Province, push the wilderness further away and enrich Eastern Canada.

Very much should be made of French-Canadian artistry. Doubtless very much of the Western World's millinery, "gown" and lingerie trade could be captured by French Canada if it was started now. Now while New York cannot get its Paris gowns as usual, because of the difficulties with ships.

The French-Canadians with their ability for intensive gardening might easily supply near-by cities with excellent vegetables. If a little more attention were given to tobacco—Quebec in time would doubtless be one of the largest tobacco growing regions in America. As it is, each little tobacco plant in the tiny patch is set out in the ground in a shelter-cup of birch bark. Suppose they had machines for "setting out" and "watering" each plant set, as in the tobacco growing region of the Connecticut Valley! Suppose they planted the seed under glass before the snow was off the ground!

Quebec is a treasure house! It has excellent railroads! And it has ocean-ports, although not on the ocean. Quebec is a power. Quebec has behind it the power of history, the power of home-life, the power of energy and thrift, the power of a gentle refinement and, as a rule, the power of two languages; and above all she has the power of her sweet, gentle, home-loving, family raising, neat women, who are apparently born capable of spinning, weaving, baking, milking, churning, berry-picking, scrubbing, painting the inside of houses, raising vegetables in the little garden, taking care of nine