

## LIFE IN A TRAPPIST MONASTERY.

For the CATHOLIC RECORD.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land."

These words of infinite wisdom are so admirably illustrated in the observations I have made within the last few days within the walls of a Trappist monastery that I take the liberty of asking your readers kindly to peruse some things which I have here written from my experience therein, and which, I hope, may tend to remove the unfavorable opinions and prejudices entertained by many people in regard to monks.

The contrast is great between the horrible results of sin which we so frequently see in the public institutions of large cities, and the air of holiness we breathe in a monastery, just as some trees are very straight and others very crooked. So in the world some are as far advanced in wickedness as are others in holiness, and those people are sadly mistaken who imagine that within the private homes of the land there is as much holiness as within the walls of a monastery.

With this introduction, let us see what kind of a life is led by a Trappist monk, and whether it is really a life of sanctity and self-sacrifice.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon of Jan. 16, 1897, I rang the door bell of the already famous Oka Monastery, thirty miles from Montreal West, and four miles from Como, the nearest railroad station. Approaching the entrance, I noticed, in large and handsome black letters, on a white board above the door, the following words: "Beati Qui Habitant in Domo Domini." What does this mean?

Perhaps it means a grand concert here this afternoon; a great bargain here to-day; don't fail to examine our goods; give us a call? Oh no!

"Blessed are they who dwell in the house of the Lord." That is just what it means. A little further, and the following sign, in French and English, meets my observation: "No Ladies are Admitted Here." "These men evidently know how to preserve peace in their homes," said a bachelor one day.

"Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land." Not only is this true for the next world, but apparently in this. When one is told that but sixteen years ago nothing existed here but stony fields and the silent woods, and that the monks knew not where to lay their heads, he cannot but wonder at the sight before him now, especially so far away from civilization. Here is a four-story stone structure of an L shape, the front measuring 372 feet in length, the wing 175, the height in each case being about 70 feet, and width 40 feet, all finished with plaster and paint from roof to cellar, heated by steam and lighted by electricity. It has a slated roof. In this building are upwards of fifty rooms neatly furnished and finished to accommodate guests.

Two seconds after I rang the bell a gentleman met me. What! a gentleman! "Why, they are all lunatics in there." Yes, that is just what the world has been saying! But let me give you Cardinal Newman's shortest definition of a gentleman, and we shall see who is the greater gentleman, the silent monk of Oka or the street dude of Montreal, the nearest city. "A gentleman," said Newman, "is one who is careful not to offend his neighbor." This gentleman did not treat me coolly because I was not dressed in the latest style, nor did he manifest any fear lest I would not pay for my board and lodging.

In less time than it takes me to write this I found myself located on the second floor in a room measuring 15 feet deep, 16 feet high and 8 feet wide, by actual measurement. This is one of the fifty or more guest-rooms, finished and furnished alike. A narrow but neat and comfortable spring bed with iron frame is at one corner, near the door, while a decent sofa is on the opposite side. Back of me is a six-pane double window 7 feet by 4 feet, showing the outside walls to be about 3 feet thick. A picture of the Holy Face of Our Saviour and images of saints ornament the walls. The floor is bare but clean, and so are the walls and ceiling. At every entrance is a small fountain containing holy water blessed on Saturday of Holy Week. A plain wooden rocker, another chair, a washstand with towels and soap are among the furniture.

The table on which I write these words is covered with a red cloth, on which is a plain crucifix, a lamp to be used after 8 o'clock when the electric lights go out, and "the rules of The Guest House of Our Lady of The Lake," written in a beautiful round hand and copied with a stylus pen. "Persons who come to remain with us for a time of recollection and solitude," it reads, "are requested to observe that La Trappe is neither a pleasure resort, a hotel nor a sanitarium, but is the House of God open only to those who desire to lead a penitential life in peace, silence and solitude. They are requested to frankly accept the following regulations. These are twelve simple rules very easy to observe, this sheet being cast with a glass in a frame of hard wood varnished with oil.

After a while in this room I am introduced to the guest-master dressed in a long white robe with hood. A very courteous bow and a hearty shake hand. "Ah! you have come to stay with us, I suppose," said he laughing. "Well, no, Father, if I understand you: I am come to make a retreat first and to visit your monastery next." "Good, good, very good," said he, with a beaming smile. "Now, if you will excuse me I shall be back

in a minute." "Excusez moi si vous plez, je serais de retour dans un moment." And he goes after the learned Father Bernard, who takes charges of retreats. A gentle rap at my door, and a tall monk from France, of middle age, wearing a full beard of short growth, and dressed in the costume of the order, meets me for the first time. A graceful bow, a hearty shake-hand and I am made to feel at home with him.

How happy and cheerful are monks! "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Only those who meet these pious men can realize what beautiful souls are illumined in the beaming faces of these hard-working religious. How thoroughly they understand human nature, and how ready they are to answer you politely, it matters not whether you call on them a hundred times a day or not. If you apologize to them, "Oh that is my pleasure," they will say, "that is our mission upon earth, to work and save souls." Where else do we get such answers? If my readers think that to be holy means to be seen with upturned eyes they are mistaken. Many are the false pictures of the kind. To be holy is to feel happy and cheerful in every sense of the word. Such are the silent monks of Oka.

At 5 o'clock the gong rang for supper, and the guest-master ushered me into the guest dining room or refectory, in the basement, where a place at the table was assigned me. "You are kindly requested to keep silence here," is the sign—in French—that meets the visitor's gaze.

The fare is simple. "We never give visitors meat," said the guest-master to me, "and of course we never take any ourselves—you have before you all that we ever offer to visitors, even the Archbishop, when he comes."

At 6:30 in winter all guests are expected to attend the "Salve Regina" or evening prayer in the chapel; and my learned instructor calling for me about that hour I followed him, passing through almost endless corridors, till we reached the chapel on the fourth floor. Here are four rows of wooden stalls lengthwise, two rows on each side facing towards the centre, and in these the Trappists, numbering about eighty, stand or kneel for hours at a time. Those wearing the white habit, and they only, are members of the choir religious, and their solemn singing of the evening hymn which is accompanied by the notes of an organ and chant-d in a half tone exactly as it was in the time of St. Bernard, is truly sublime.

Never shall I forget my first impression of the morning service at 2:30 o'clock. At times the lights were turned down but not altogether, leaving so many monks and brothers in white and brown garments, to look like phantoms in the distance, while chanting in half tone and long rest goes on. From the writer's experience it was highly edifying. As if by unseen angels, two candles are lit on the altar at the opposite end of the long room; again, all is dark and silent.

This is only a temporary chapel. The monastery chapel, in the L part of the building, is a grand stone structure under construction, which will soon be completed. Its ceiling is of Roman architecture, its height from its centre to the floor being 70 feet; its greatest length is 180 feet; its width for 90 feet at the centre is 83 feet, the rest being 30 feet. One of the monks who kindly showed me this edifice said to me very earnestly: "We have the ceiling high and plastered white, as you see, to inspire holy thoughts." Yes, the monk knows it; sublimity inspires divine thoughts.

At every corner of the monastery are signs reminding us of deaths. Here and there on the walls of cloisters or halls where monks may occasionally be found reading or writing, are these impressive signs, in French, painted in black and red letters, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "A bad death is irreparable." "We die well or ill but once." "The means of finding God is not to search relying on our own strength, or as if He were far off." "To possess God it is not necessary to have great talents; it is necessary to have a heart and to love." "Obedience is better than sacrifice." "Charity is the pupil of the eye; he who violates it is injured a very delicate thing; and 'Without silence and recollection devotion is but a shadow.' I count a thousand years, one hundred thousand years, one million times a thousand years, as many million times a thousand years as there are leaves in the woods, blades of grass on land, grains of sand at the seashore, drops of water in the sea, atoms in the air, stars in the heavens, and I know not what eternity is."

The Trappists do not, as it is commonly thought, daily dig a portion of their own graves. When one of them dies and has been buried, a new grave is begun beside the one just filled, as a reminder to all survivors that some one of them must surely take his place therein. So, too, when each seeks the cemetery enclosure, in hours of holy meditation, and, standing bareheaded among the graves, prays softly for the soul of his departed brethren, he may come for a time to this unfinished grave, and will pray Heaven, if he be next, to dismiss his soul in peace.

When shown their refectory or dining room I certainly did not see fine linen nor silver ware. Their tables are long, bare wooden benches with stools for seats. Their dishes, very scant in variety, are of wood and tin. Over the door, in plain letters, are these words: "Dieu me voit (God sees me)." "We eat only bread and

vegetables," said the monk who showed me this department. "We never taste meat, fish or eggs. We use but a mouthful of cheese and butter at some meals. On three days of the week we have rice or milk, never rice and milk; the rest of the week vegetables. Our drink, besides water, is either tea or coffee, and occasionally home-made cider. From Easter till September 14th, we have two meals, the first being at 11 and a collation at 6 in the evening. The rest of the year we take one full meal at 11:30 and a light collation at 5:30.

"Do not men break down under such rigid and austere discipline and such poor fare?" my instructor was asked.

"At first the life is exceedingly severe, but we gradually get accustomed to it. There is very seldom any sickness among the Trappists. They generally die from old age and seldom before eighty years of age. Through the kind privilege of our good Father Abbot," continued he, "the lay brothers who are of a weak constitution may take a small meal before going to work in the morning, but that is against the common rules of the order."

"Yes, it is a severe life; we never speak to one another except to our Superior, and that in case of extreme necessity, with permission. We never receive newspapers, and can write only occasionally to relatives, our letters being read by the Father Abbot."

Excepting when confessing his sins and singing the offices of the Church the Trappists' tongue becomes, as far as possible, a superfluous member. He speaks only by permission to his Superior, and always simply to the point. Even for necessary speech he is taught to substitute a language of signs as fully systematized as the speech of the deaf and dumb.

Should he, while at work, for example, wound his fellow-workman, sorrow may be expressed by striking his breast. A desire to confess is shown by lifting one hand to the mouth and striking the breast with the other. The maker of cheese, again crosses two fingers at the middle point to let you know that it is made half of milk and half of cream. It is silence, says the Trappist, that shuts out new ideas, worldly topics, controversy. It is silence that enables the soul to contemplate with singleness and mortification the infinite perfection of the Eternal. Men eminent in law and medicine, who formerly belonged to rich families and fashionable circles in various parts of the world, are members of the order.

"In the chapter room," said my learned instructor, "is where the Trappists who have violated the rules of the order make their self-accusations, prostrating themselves upon their faces on the floor and begging pardon of God and their brethren. It is there, also, they receive their penance, which, at times, is very severe. On every Friday morning all Trappists go through the ordeal of whipping their naked shoulders, and 'the way they voluntarily whip themselves,' said a secular priest to me the other day, 'is simply wonderful. There must be saints among them.' 'Oh what fools!' some will say. But who are actually the greater fools, those who support occasions of sin, in cities, or those who avoid dangerous occasions? 'As ye live so will ye die.' Far easier it is to suffer the torture of whipping one's body than to cure certain diseases often contracted in the outside world. May this be sufficient to show the possibility of monks living a life of perfect celibacy? If any of my readers doubt the answer to this, it is because he needs a little more whipping than ever he received, or he must have read novels written by culprits who were much in need of horse-whipping."

At 2 o'clock in the morning on week days, at 1:30 on Sundays, and at 1 o'clock on feast days, such as that of St. Bernard (Aug. 20), their patron saint, or that of Easter, the Trappists monks rise and file into the chapel. Then begins the singing of Canonical offices, Matins, and Lauds, to last till 4 o'clock, when private Masses begin which last till 5:30, about twenty Masses going on at the same time. That over, they go to the chapter-room, where they accuse themselves of their faults and receive penances. Then the lay brothers go to work, while the monks are at liberty to write and study till 7 o'clock in summer and 7:45 a. m. in winter, when they must proceed to the chapel again for the office of Tierce, High Mass and Sexte, after which they do manual labor till 11 o'clock. They have then their noon office, followed by dinner, after which they do manual labor or study till 4:30 p. m., when Vespers begin. At 6:30 in winter and 7:30 p. m. in summer they have "Salve Regina" or Office of Compliment, followed by retiring for the night. Whether digging potatoes in the field, or mowing hay in the meadows, monks will always chant their day office. Altogether they spend about seven hours in church every day, and have about two hours for study in summer and four in winter.

In winter the Trappists retire at 7 o'clock, immediately after "Salve Regina." In summer they sleep for an hour in the middle of the day, from 12 to 1 o'clock, and retire at 8 o'clock till 2 o'clock in the morning, it is what they call dead silence. Not a word is spoken, even by the Abbot. If something extraordinary happens, if a friar be taken very sick, for instance, word is brought to the Abbot and he sends for a physician or does what is necessary.

Those who are priests and those who have been admitted as choir religious, wear white woolen robes with cloaks of the same color and material reaching

to their heels, and with large flowing sleeves. On the cloak is their hood. "These are the monks proper," said my learned instructor. "The others who wear the heavy brown habit, with hood," continued he, "are not monks but lay-brothers, and such they must be called." On account of this difference between brothers and monks many mistakes have been made by magazine contributors in writing on this subject. If this article is authentic, though not without faults, give not the writer any credit but give it to my learned instructor at Oka, who so kindly supplied me with valuable information.

The lay brothers are not required to attend the singing of the various offices. After attending Mass they go to work, which they begin between 6 and 7 o'clock in the morning. The mitred Abbot works just as hard as the rest. Idleness to the Trappist is the enemy of the soul. Whatever a monk's previous station may have been he must perform, according to the rules just as rigidly as the humblest laborer in the monastery. He sleeps with his clothes on, like the others, upon a straw mattress placed upon a shelf in a cell, about six feet wide but open at the top. Each dormitory with thirty or more such stalls is always well ventilated.

When at work monks always wear their black scapulars, the brothers their brown ones, in front and behind reaching below their leather belts. On the scapular is another hood of the same color and material as the first. Their robe is turned up to the knees and held so by means of ropes to their hips. The lay brothers who attend the barn and laundry, and wherever dirt is likely to fall on their habit, wear a brown canvas overall. But neither friars nor monks when at work wear their long cloaks with hood. That they use to attend church service.

Quite a variety of occupations are found in a monastery. Besides a steam saw mill and a planing mill, a cider mill and a grist mill, a cheese and butter factory, a grape press and a large forge, there is a tin smith's shop and a pharmacy; a saddlery, where the broken gear used for the cultivating of the soil is mended; a tailor's shop where the worn garments are patched; a shoe maker's shop, where the coarse, heavy shoes of the friars are made and cobbled; also a barber's shop, where some of the Trappists' beards are shaved twice a month, and the Trappists' head is monthly shorn. During winter the most of the monks at Oka wear full beards, and the head of some of them is not shaved.

"To what do you chiefly owe your success," my instructor was asked. "God is good to us. We work only for His glory. We strive to re-claim the waste places of the earth and make them fruitful. The men work hard, and you see it costs us very little to live. Our clothing does not cost much, and our food practically nothing. Our lives are devoted to work, prayer and meditation."

"How do you carry on business with the outside world?" "When we have produce to sell our Father Abbot commissions some one who goes to Montreal and does the business transactions for the house. We have a lot of stock horses, cattle and pigs, and we make revenue out of them."

Their farm, the writer may add, is a grand object lesson to farmers and visitors. The sight of their one hundred cows, twenty horses, two hundred hogs, and one hundred young pigs, besides the poultry, would repay ones time and expenses in travelling miles to visit their establishment.

It is so much that the monks at Oka have now one of the best colleges of agriculture in the country attached to their abbey, and this college of agriculture is now partly supported by the local Government, in order to encourage farming in the Province of Quebec.

Their fields differ in appearance from those of French Canadian farmers on the way between Como and Oka. The boulders which in some places covered the ground to such an extent as to make it difficult for a sheep to find pasture, have been gathered into well-shaped stone walls or fences. Some fields have been denuded of stones altogether and young orchards have been planted therein. There is an appearance of systematic industry as soon as we come upon the estate of the silent monks.

It is no exaggeration to say, it is even a well known fact, that the best cheese made in this country is made at Oka. The following are the well-known brands of their celebrated cheese, first made in France, now made at Oka and nowhere else in this country. "Port du Salut," "Camembert," and "Gruyere." They always find ready markets for it in all parts of the world. We might say that Oka is famous for its cheese and medicinal wines. Years ago an eminent physician in France, a Doctor De Breynne by name, left the world and became a monk. The wines at Oka, so famous in America, are made according to the scientific instructions and discoveries of that learned scientist and physician.

Their fruit nursery, renowned all over Canada, is one of the best in this country. They sold last year upwards of 15,000 young apple trees. That is their specialty. Besides this, they cultivate a vast number of plum trees, cherry trees, strawberries, raspberries and the best of wine plants which they sell every year in large quantities. Shall we ask, then, how the Oka Trappists pay for their valuable pile of buildings erected to the honor and greater glory of God?

As the above and following show, what the monks did for the cause of science, industry, and learning, as well as feeding the worthy poor, during the middle ages they continue doing at the close of the nineteenth century. Visitors to the monastery are always well received and cared for, hospitality being one of the rules of the order. Food and shelter it has never denied even to the poorest, and it asks no compensation, accepting as such what the stranger may give. But the greatest personage in the land receives exactly the same treatment as the humble wayfarer who may seek a night's shelter.

The first monastery of this order was established by St. Robert, in 1,098, then called the Cistercian order. The second Abbot was St. Alberic; the third St. Stephen; and St. Bernard, who established one hundred monasteries in Europe, was the fourth. He is looked upon as the patron of the Cistercian Order of Monks. A narrow gorge called La Trappe, in France, which gave entrance to a Trappist Monastery founded by Rotron Count of Perce, in 1,140 and kept by a colony of Benedictine monks, gave the name Trappist. In 1,664 the order was revived and organized by DeRance, a godson of Cardinal Richelieu.

The establishment of "Our Lady of the Lake," or the Oka Monastery, my instructor said to me, dates from 1881, the year in which the "bad government of France" expelled the Trappists from that country. Three monks came to Canada, and the Sulpicians, a very wealthy corporation with headquarters in Montreal, gave the one thousand acres of waste land which the silent monks are rapidly transforming to a magnificent farm. The grand pile now at Oka represents the growth of that wonderful mustard seed which from a small beginning became a wide-spreading tree, and it illustrates the text: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land."

Besides the Oka Abbey in this country, there are "Our Lady of Gethsemane," near Louisville, Kentucky, U. S., a third monastery near Dubuque, Iowa, U. S.; a fourth near Winnipeg, Manitoba; a fifth at Tracadie, Nova Scotia, and a sixth, Our Lady of Missisquoi, at Lake St. John, P. Q., belonging to the Trappist Order. The last named is a branch of the Oka monastery, established four years ago. The Quebec Government gave the land free for this monastery, to encourage agriculture and colonization.

Richard E. Delaney.

## Honored by the Holy Father.

The London *Tablet* relates a touching incident that recently took place at Kremsier, in Moravia. The Archbishop of Olmutz, Mgr. Kohn, is the son of very poor parents—hard-working peasants—who at the cost of many privations had procured for their child the blessings of his early education. The Holy Father, desirous of rewarding this good old couple, had sent them by their son two special distinctions—a cross for the mother, and the badge of St. Gregory the Great for the father. The aged couple, accompanied by their other children, attended the Archbishop's mass in his private chapel and communicated at his hands. After hearing a second mass, he solemnly conferred the decorations sent from Rome.

## Catholic France.

Two-thirds of the priests and four-fifths of the brothers and sisters who labor in missionary countries are of French nationality. It is also said that of one hundred and nineteen priests who have suffered martyrdom during the present century ninety five were French. A great glory for Catholic France, and something that ought to be remembered during these days when we hear so much that reflects on our French brethren.

Remember—only such medicines were admitted for exhibition at the World's Fair as are accepted for use, by physicians, in the practice of medicine, Ayer's Sarsaparilla, Ayer's Cherry Pectoral, and Ayer's Pills being included in the list. They are standard medicines.

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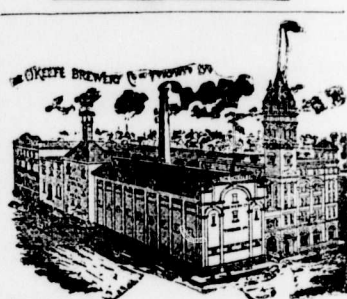
Fifty Years Ago.

This is the way it was bound to look when grandfather had his "pictorial look." These were the shadows cast before The coming of Conjuror Daguerre And his art, like a girl in a pinafore Some day to bloom to a goddess fair. Men certainly were not as black, we know As they pictured them, 50 years ago.

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Department of Crown Lands  
(Woods and Forests Branch)  
Toronto, June 2nd, 1897.

Notice is hereby given that under authority of Orders in Council, TIMBER BERTHS as hereunder mentioned in the NIPISING, ALGOMA and RAINY RIVER DISTRICTS, viz., the Townships of RATIBURN, KELLY, DAVIS, the North half of SCADDING and that part of HANMER South of the NIPISING RIVER, all in the District of Nipissing; the Township of CORPUS ADDITIONAL, and certain small areas on the SPANISH and BISCATAWAS waters in the District of ALGOMA; and berths 36 and 37 of berths 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, on MAIN TOU LAKE, and certain small scattered areas in the District of RAINY RIVER, will be offered for Sale by Public Auction, at the Department of Crown Lands, Toronto, at the hour of ONE o'clock p. m. on WEDNESDAY, the EIGHTEENTH day of AUGUST next.

Sheets containing conditions and terms of Sale, with information as to Areas, Lots and Concessions comprised in each Berth, will be furnished on application personally or by letter, to the Department of Crown Lands or to the Crown Timber Offices at OTTAWA and RAT PORTAGE. J. M. GIBSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.

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The handsome dining-room of "The Fraser" has a seating capacity for 500 guests. The proprietor recently erected an addition to the House, which will increase the accommodation by ten rooms. The bar room has been removed from the hotel, and a barber shop and other accessories have been provided. Three Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway trains leave the Port daily, connecting at London and at St. Thomas, running east, west and north to all important points. Wm. FRASER, Proprietor.

"How much dost thou

We all love justice love of justice would to us. There is no morally dead as not ment of justice well and the public opinion never failed in the manifest injustice. the abstract? When amine the matter in personal aspects we reason to doubt wh justice is so sincere o seems, for we find which everlastingly ice there is a vast crying injustice, and that the lofty sentiment claimed from pole rather than absolute have justice done to apprehend it; but a clined to do justice to the golden rule? sert that there is no in the congregation demn the flagrant in this day's Gospel: b are there who look the parable to ourse unjust transactions and resolve to repai of our ability?

"How much dost awkward question meet: not that the debtors whose debts tutors, not their fa there undoubtedly a not hosts of dishon debts are the result gance or dissipation and turn and quibb way in order to e ections. Yet these p the cry of justice, a for upright Christi men! Now we mig certain fact once fo be an honest man, Christian, who doe reasonable effort to debts.

The man or the debt and who doe endeavor to pay t little less than a fra and shall not: ente heaven. Do you m man who owes h baker, or his groce refuses payment, w to spend for drink cursious, and perha side or the mount man? Would y woman honest w new dresses and b in debt for the old of justice has the p five or ten or fi neighbor in a pin neglects to pay o requested to do so ag But what is one l to pay one's de bound to starve family, but you a the very verge of lawful debts are rigid retrenchment and all superfluit should be cut off.

Justice in the a thing to talk about esty is the real How much dost th are you going to tical questions that put to his own co ber that there is reckoning appoint and if you appea tribunal with the your soul "You prison" and, in t Jesus: "Amen. shalt not go out fr repay the last farth

News comes from version to Cathol shrine of an Angli Louisa Hawtre, c Hawtre and thir Dr. Hawtre, prov of Eton, Mrs. Moly mother at the c The impressive cer by a crowd of sy residents, French and American. I the High Altar. her first Communi able number of is communicated for Hawtre was rece on June 24, by th an American prie of Boston, who ha some years back. was converted w strangers, with w she is not acquai had first visited I 14th this year, the Lady's second ap when she felt so st the supernatur objects amid whi that she at once tation in Christi version we have a of the manifest po —Catholic News.

After a Hood's Sarsapar scrofula. I was we Hood's Sarsaparilla me strong and well. had catarrhal feve Hood's Sarsaparilla complete cure." S Dolla, Nova Scotia.

HOOD'S PILLS a cathartic, easy to ta