

Quebec

In Artist Eyes.

By Bertram G. Goodhue.

MY DEAR —:

You will, no doubt, be surprised at finding a letter of mine interspersed with sketches, since I have always expressed but slight regard for such things; but, my dear fellow, there are sketches—and sketches. When one works with the simplest materials like my B. pencil and schoolboy's pad—well and good—those are sketches; but it's a different thing when he spends several days on each one of his drawings from Nature; and then, when the winter cometh and no man can sketch, goes back to town and holds an exhibition (duly posterred) and sells those sketches for good round sums.

Do you remember our adieu to Mexico, four years ago, when we came out of the little station at Paso del Norte? and how we felt that we were saying good-bye to all that is beautiful on the continent? And we were not far from right, you and I, looking at the thing from our bigoted point of view. And do you remember how we sat in the "smoker," alongside of all the garrulous dons, and settled forever the difference between the beautiful and picturesque?

Well, allowing Mexico to represent the one, Quebec certainly will do for the other, for it's all picturesqueness and no real beauty.

I am stopping at Miss Leonard's, on the Place d'Armes, and my lodgings are all I could ask, though as different from anything of the sort we have in the States as is possible to fancy. The price of my little room, with three good meals, is \$1.50 a day, and this is about the average rate here, certainly not much for the excellent entertainment it affords. But you were always a sybarite, so I must tell you that not fifty steps from Miss Leonard's stands a most gorgeous pile, called the Château Frontenac, forsooth, where you can pay about anything you please. If you have sold well lately, I fancy you will prefer to take up your abode there. Owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, it is run on the most improved principles, and is always well patronized, they tell me. It is supposed to look like such a château as the Sieur de Frontenac might have built, had he been the Canadian Pacific Railway; and from across the river it is not such an awful failure, barring its garish salmon color, which "swears" at everything else in the town. Whatever hue the other buildings here may have been originally doesn't matter, they are all grey now—green grey, blue grey and purple grey; greyish brown, yellow and pink. Still, I should not abuse the hotel, for, after all, it has a *café*, where, wonderful to relate, you can get things to eat, drink and smoke up to eleven in the evening.

Saturday is market-day here, and the thing to do is to get up early in the morning and go to the market before breakfast, forgetting the aching void, like a Spartan, in the interest of art. There are two market-places, but the Marché Champlain is the best, as well as the biggest one, and it's really so interesting after you get to it that you forget all about breakfast.

Of course you know there is scarcely a rod of level ground in all Quebec, so you must be prepared, on coming out of your lodgings, for a considerable rise in temperature before getting to the market, which lies on the waterside. Crossing the Place d'Armes, which isn't level by a good deal, and you begin to descend. Why, man, you may just as well hug your traps tightly under your arm and run for it—you'll have to, anyway—so this direction is superfluous. Down you go, bumping around corners and tumbling down long

flights of steps with imminent risk to life and limb, until you bring up, breathless and staring, on the edge of the quays. Now if you will turn about, you will see the market a little behind you—you passed it without noticing it, you will remember; and if you will look up into the air, about 800 feet above you, you will see the terrace and the hotel, with specks of people hanging over the rail and looking down at the busy ant-hill of a market below.

The market place is covered with boards in lieu of pavement, as indeed are nearly all of the streets in the old town, though away up in the English quarter, "Faubourg," as the French call it, they order such things better, or at any rate differently. Every square yard of this boarding is occupied now by fat old "habitant" women in straw hats, each one sitting on a little box, and holding a tremendous, brass-handled umbrella over her head, for some unknown reason, since it isn't raining, and if it were, their *chapeaux de poy* would be ample protection.

I had a very hard time getting any decent sketches in the market; what with the restlessness of the vendors themselves, and the hurrying struggling crowd filling all the interstices, no sooner had I put my pencil to the paper than, lo! the subject was out of sight. Finally, I bribed one or two of those on the outskirts of the throng to look pleasant for me, *cinq sous pour cinq minutes*, and even at this ruinous rate they were always out of pose directly a possible customer came within hailing or grabbing distance.

The jargon is of all kinds too—some English, of course, but mostly French of an incomprehensible kind. I had supposed my stock of Gallic capable of taking me through France itself, but here, within a few hundred miles of my own home, I found myself utterly at a loss, nor have I improved, except in so far as to start my vocabulary all over again.

For instance, I had always supposed that *froid* meant cold, but here they say *frette* (Heaven only knows how they spell it, but this is the way it sounds), and as in this case, so with all other words apparently. Finally, I fell in with two urchins, in *Sous le Cap*, the most deliciously picturesque and dirtily delightful street in the town, who bore the locally historic name of Vaudreil. These two seemed to comprehend my feeble efforts in their lingo better than any one else (what well-educated young men they must be, to be sure), and under their guidance I have seen things I should surely have passed over if left to my own devices, such as short cuts up apparently sheer precipices and the like. Octave and Emil are their names, and we have grown to be quite good friends, so much so that I can now rely on finding them whenever I want them. There was one other man whose French I was able to understand. He was a tailor of whom I

inquired my way as he stood in his shop-door. Just then a child ran up to him and he spoke to it in French. Strange to relate, I understood what he said perfectly, and ventured to compliment him on it, saying, "You speak better French than the others." "Of course, I am a Dutchman," he replied calmly.

I have mentioned *Sous le Cap* in terms of praise, and it deserves all and more than I have said. It winds around the cliff from one to another point of comparative safety, though it is



THE CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME DES VICTOIRES, QUEBEC.

scarcely wide enough to allow of driving through a *calèche*, the

local substitute for *coupes*—halfway between a dog-cart and an old-fashioned chaise. On the upper side the houses can't have any back rooms at all, for

the jagged cliff cuts into them constantly, while on the other they are built apparently on nothingness. There isn't an atom of architecture, properly speaking, only clothes-lines and funny squared logs for sidewalks and steps; ladders and companionways leading in every direction, covered bridges, chickens and dirt.

The Rue Petite Champlain is another typical street, and while it does not possess the charm of *Sous le Cap*, still its architecture is more pretentious, being usually

of stone, and at one end are the famous Breakneck Steps. But alas! while these once deserved their name their glory is now departed.

However I purchased a photograph of them in their original state before the Goths and Vandals had removed them.

Come: then we will sketch together and sight-see together, and loaf and smoke together on moonlit nights on some bench on Dufferin Terrace, with the silent, mysterious fortress above us, and the seething lamplit old town below; and looking out across the shimmering Saint Lawrence, we will compare notes as we did at Paso del Norte, and settle things all over again.

THE STUDIO.