

# TRIFLUVIAN NOTES.

## The Diocese, Cathedral and Bishop.

A Most Historic Place—A Religious, Missionary, Colonizing and Commercial Centre—Mgr. L. F. Lafleche—A Deep Student, Zealous Prelate and Powerful Preacher—A Short Sketch that May Prove Interesting.

As we have already seen, the town of Three Rivers dates from 1634. It is the second oldest in Canada. As early as 1609 Champlain called in upon the place, on his way to the future Fort Richelieu, and to that magnificent lake which still bears his name. From the commencement, by its position at the confluence of the St. Maurice and St. Lawrence, Three Rivers became a great missionary centre, from which the pioneer priests went forth in all directions to carry the lights of Christianity and civilization to the Indian tribes. Subsequently its situation was admirably calculated to command a great commercial influence, for by the highway of the St. Maurice the northern forests became accessible, and down its waters the pine and spruce products were floated to the mills or the shipping docks that naturally sprang up under the spell of mercantile activity. Of the long and interesting story, that takes in two centuries and a half, we do not purpose giving any in this issue; nor will we load our present article with details of the great lumbering operations which have, for long years, been the principle source of the city's prosperity. The grand, wild and charming scenery of the St. Maurice must await a trip in the company of the early missionaries, or of the more recent explorers and bushmen. For the present we have to do with the very centre of Three Rivers, and with that which belongs to the immediate domain of the diocese.

### THE CATHEDRAL AND PALACE.

Seated in the Park, one bright morning in mid-summer, we enjoyed the cool breeze that came up from the great river, shook the branches of the elms and played amongst the leaves of the maples overhead. Dozens of citizens passed, all coming from different points of the compass, and all going in the direction of the splendid out-stone edifice that appeared grandly upon the opposite side of the street. They were pious worshippers, wending their way to early Mass; the building that they entered was the Cathedral of Three Rivers. Was it a spirit of devotion, or one of curiosity, or the two combined, that suggested our movement? It matters not; we arose and followed the good people into the church. Exteriorly the Cathedral is a very grand and imposing edifice. It has the appearance—at first sight—of being more vast than it really is. Strange to say that for almost the same reason, the very opposite effects are produced—on first approach—by the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, and this unpretentious Cathedral in Canada. So perfect are the proportions, and symmetrical the lines of St. Peter's, that a traveller, who has formed wonderful ideas of the great temple from reading, is surprised to find that it does not come up to his expectations. It is only when he commences to ascend the steps, or when he enters the great door and takes a hurried glance down the vast interior, that he begins to feel its wonderful greatness, its majesty and stupendousness crowding upon him. It may seem like a paradox, yet true it is, that for the very same reason, of its elegant proportions and perfection of design, the Cathedral of Three Rivers seems far larger than it really is; and only when you have entered and paced the full length of the main aisle do you find that it is not even as vast—if near so—as the Basilica of Ottawa. Yet there is an air of grandeur about everything in the temple that lends inspiration to the worshipper, and you forget the dimensions of the church in the beauty of your surroundings, in the chaste ornaments, the fine paintings, the landscape frescoes, and the order that reigns.

A glance at the pulpit recalls to mind that from that spot, times out of mind, has the gifted and venerable Bishop of Three Rivers poured forth his fervent exhortations and delivered his masterly

instructions. This thought awakens a desire—very legitimate indeed—of seeing the worthy prelate in his own home. Stepping out of the Cathedral we notice, to our left, and still in front of the public park, the imposing front of the episcopal palace. Surrounded by well-kept and elegant grounds, that large, four-storey, limestone building presents an appearance of combined elegance and strength. Fit residence for a character like that of the good Bishop—a character that is both prepossessing and powerful. But if the stones of the palace are mute in their solidity, there is an eloquence about the one whose presence adds life to the palace that is not silent when the glory of God or the good of humanity demands its expression. The palace is truly a palace; its rooms and corridors are large, lofty, lightsome and airy. There is a great cheerfulness about the place that truly encourages one on entering, and drives away all idea of formality or bashful hesitation. It was after the morning exercises were all over and that His Lordship was most likely to be at the disposal of strangers, that we walked up the broad steps, rang the bell, and asked to see the Bishop of Three Rivers.

### MR. L. F. LAFLECHE—HIS SACERDOTAL JUBILEE.

We were ushered into the presence of a tall, white-haired, venerable looking prelate, who kindly arose and came forward a few steps, extended his hand and bade us a hearty welcome. Knowing somewhat of the wonderful missionary life of this good man, and being aware that he was within a few weeks of his seventy-sixth birthday, we had been prepared to find him bent under the weight of years and the effects of long and strength-breaking labors; but imagine our surprise and delight to find ourselves in presence of one upon whom the rod of unceasing work and the hand of inexorable time had left scarcely any impression beyond a few wrinkles on the cheeks and the snows of many winters on the hair. The grasp of the hand was firm and warm, the attitude erect and dignified, the step elastic and firm, the eye sparkling with life, intelligence and ardor, the voice strongly sweet and mildly powerful, and the whole appearance—not unlike, at first approach, the idea we might form of His Holiness in the Vatican—that of a person in the full vigor of manhood, and with all reasonable expectations of a decade, or even a score more of years in the field of apostleship.

But it was only when we sat down and commenced a conversation that we learned truly the secret of the Bishop's wonderful success as a missionary and a preacher. We had heard, from youth, that one of the greatest pulpit orators of our country was Mgr. Lafleche; but scarcely had we been ten minutes in his presence than we discovered him to be even greater than we had ever imagined. In the pulpit, in presence of a vast number of people, and with a subject that is most congenial, it is not surprising, at times, to find a man waxing wonderfully eloquent; but it is rare to find a man, who in all the calmness of a private conversation, can glow with enthusiasm, go from subject to subject with the rapidity of lightning, weave all the different topics touched upon into an unbroken chain, impart an absorbing interest to each one of those links, letting none drop until the listener is thoroughly convinced thereon, and displaying throughout a depth of reasoning rarely met with and a spirit of ubiquitous research that suggests a living encyclopædia. Yet such is Mgr. Lafleche, the present Bishop of Three Rivers. This not being a regular newspaper interview, and not feeling that we would be justified in unfolding all the interesting portions of that lengthy and charming conversation, we will leave our readers to imagine the subjects discussed—or rather expatiated

on by the Bishop—while we tell, in a few words, the story of his Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee.

Fifty years have passed away since, in the old city of Quebec, the future Bishop, the then zealous ecclesiastic, Louis Francois Lafleche, might have repeated sentiments such as Marbeuf so beautifully expresses:

"Demain, le gravital les degres de l'autel, Je tiendrais dans mes mains le fils de l'Eternel."

or as McGee so piously conveys the idea:

"In the night-time, I groan'd on my bed,  
I felt, O my Father! Thy rod;  
I felt all Thy beauty and truth;  
In the morning I rose and I said,  
'I will go to the altar of God—  
To God, who rejoiceth my youth.'"

On the 4th September, 1818, Louis Francois Richer-Lafleche was born at Ste. Anne de la Perade. Of a long line of distinguished and pious ancestors, he traces his family back to the seigneurs of that old town of Lafleche in Anjou, the town whose college has been famed over all Europe, and which sent forth some of the best, as well as greatest, men of two generations. From his early youth he showed a vocation and an aptitude both for the Church and for missionary life. After a very brilliant career of studies and a remarkably able theological course he was ordained priest, in the old Basilica of Quebec, by the late lamented Mgr. Turgeon, on the 7th January, 1844. After remaining for a few months as assistant parish priest of St. Gregoire, he started on 14th April, 1844, for the missions along the Red River and over the great North-West. During twelve years the young, energetic and indefatigable missionary labored amongst the Indian tribes of that far away region. There was no C.P.R. in those days; neither were there steamboats or any modern modes of conveyance. In summer the bark canoe and in winter the snowshoes were the only means of locomotion. Varied and interesting were the experiences of Father Lafleche, and the story of those twelve years would form a most romantic as well as edifying volume. He beheld the dawn of civilization in lands that have since been brought to our very doors. He was of those who rocked the cradle of that wonderful region. After his return, in 1856, from the North-West he became superior of the Nicolet Seminary, with the title of Vicar-General of Three Rivers. In September, 1861, he was called to the Episcopal Palace at Three Rivers, by Mgr. Thomas Cooke, who gave him charge of the finances of the diocese.

On the 22nd of November, 1866, the late Holy Father, Pius IX., named him Bishop of Anthon in *partibus infidelium*, and Coadjutor Bishop of Three Rivers *cum futura successione*. The consecration took place in the Three Rivers Cathedral, in February, 1867, by Mgr. Baillargeon, assisted by the Bishops of Toronto and St. Hyacinthe. In 1869, Mgr. Cooke—who had grown quite feeble—named Bishop Lafleche Administrator of the diocese. In the following April Bishop Cooke died, and Mgr. Lafleche became Bishop of Three Rivers. At the time of his succession to the title he was in Rome, attending the Vatican Council. He was there when the grand dogma of the Infallibility was pronounced. Since then he has made several journeys to the Eternal City. In France and elsewhere in Europe he has won the esteem and respect of some of the most eminent Churchmen of the age. The volume of letters, addresses, telegrams, and other testimonials that poured in from all sides on the recent occasion of his jubilee, constitutes the most precious and magnificent monument that could be raised in honor of a man, a priest, a prelate.

We thought it well to give our readers these few details of a life that will yet occupy a splendid page in the history of Canada. To tell the story of the magnificent celebration, the enthusiasm, the joy, the grandeur of display, and the countless evidences of universal love, respect and admiration that marked the two days of demonstration when Three Rivers was ablaze with zeal to do honor to the grand man who occupied the episcopal throne of the diocese, would demand a little book in itself. But we could not pass through this historic town without pausing for a few moments at the palace and inviting our readers to an acquaintance with the one who rules therein. Apart from all that has been done in the various parishes belonging to the diocese, the churches built, the congregations formed, the societies organized, the charities established, we find in

the Cathedral town itself the countless evidences of Bishop Lafleche's zeal. The magnificent College—one of the finest institutions in the Province, is alone a monument to his labors in the cause of education; the Hospital—under the care of the Sisters of Providence—an institution that might well rival any in Quebec or Montreal, is an orphanage, an asylum for the aged, a refuge, and a home for the sick, all in one. It is a vast stone edifice, consisting of a front and three immense wings, in the centre of which is the elegant and ample chapel. Here are hundreds of inmates; boarders, who seek the quiet and repose of the house; sick people, who come to profit by the skilled medical attendance; children that are parentless and have only the good sisters to rely upon for protection; old men and women, tottering to the grave, who have out-lived their friends; all well cared for, well fed, well clothed. It is a noble work that of the Providence, and it is one of the principal ornaments of the diocese.

But if, in the impartiality of his character, a soft corner could be found in his heart for any one institution, we are under the impression that Mgr. Lafleche would feel inclined toward the grey old monastery, where the daughters of St. Ursule are hidden away from the world, and where they labor so incessantly for the very public that they have left behind. A more charming and instructive half hour could not be spent than in the company of that learned theologian, gifted orator, able administrator and zealous missionary. The spirit that carried him into the wilds of the North-West—fifty years ago—is still alive within his breast, and we pray that many years will roll past before God's angel is sent to extinguish that spark of missionary vitality.

EDITOR TRUE WITNESS.

### REV. FATHER TOUPIN.

There is no more popular and dearly-beloved priest in Montreal than Rev. Father Toupin, S.S., of St. Patrick's. Sorry would all be to miss him from the city. For many years past Father Toupin has been accustomed to take his short vacation at Oka, amongst the quiet of the Trappist monastery, and within reach of a remnant of the Aborigines. He goes to enjoy a few days away from the world's din and excitement, and, as he graphically describes it, "to pray, to read and to rest." It is in prayer and in reading that good Father Toupin always finds rest. But we are selfish, and we don't like the idea of Father Toupin's perpetual attraction toward Oka. He might be induced—in a moment of fervor—to join the Trappist Order, and the people of Montreal would be deprived of his splendid services in the cause of religion; or else he might take an idea to go upon Indian missionary work, and thus place his innumerable friends in a sad position of regret and loss. Still, we don't think he would abandon his loving friends of St. Patrick's even for the sake of the Indians, or for the austerities of a monastic life. So our fears are groundless. But seriously, we do wish Father Toupin a pleasant and beneficial vacation, and may he be enabled—with God's bounty—to enjoy a score more of such holidays of prayer, reading and rest.

### THE HAPPINESS OF OTHERS.

The realization of happiness, in its broadest sense, is the object of life. Happiness comes through conformity to natural law—physical or spiritual. If I fail of "virtue"—contravene the natural order—the matter is between myself and that order with which I find myself in conflict. For my wrong act I suffer, and in so doing may gain experience which shall be a surer guide to future happiness. But if my action interferes with the freedom of another's action I thereby deny to him "righteousness," and may compel him to "vice," with the resultant unhappiness. For my act another suffers.

Hence it follows that, in the great realm of mutual conduct, those actions of the individual—or those aspects of his actions—which have to do with others, those actions which we call social, industrial, political, etc., should be so regulated as to permit to other individuals equal freedom, the fullest possible freedom, to do as to them seems best—that is, under our definition, to do "righteousness."

Callousness lies on one-side of the skin, patience on the other.