

speaks English, says it is "the la-argest in Kennada—that convent;" and surely with the October sun shining on its pillared front, and the last yellow largesse of autumn scattered about its solid base, and the broad blue St Lawrence flowing grandly past, it is the most beautiful in "Kennada." We are admitted to the reception room, which is really quite a large *salon*, adorned with oil paintings of His Holiness the Pope, the sister who founded the Order very humbly at Longueuil across the river there, and the usual religious subjects. This lady in the black habit and the plain white hood, which with the veil is the dress of the sisters of J sus and Mary, who presents each cheek to be kissed by our French friend, and bows pleasantly to the rest of us, is the Mother Superior of the whole Order. The responsibility of her charge may be imagined when we hear that it has missions in Florida, California, British Columbia. She looks like an organiser and directress this nun, with her keen, intellectual face, ready speech, and nervous, energetic manner. She has been for eighteen years at the head of a mission in California, and it is a little odd to note the traces of Americanism in her voice and ways. One looks for national traits in secular flocks, but expects, somehow, nuns to be femingeneous, if I may coin a word. The Superioress chats with us for a while, and hands us over to a smiling little English nun, who shows us the school-rooms, where one hundred and sixty-five young ladies, all the way from five to eighteen are receiving the usual convent instruction, and the chapel, a perfect copy of that of St. Marie Maguere of Rome, and very beautiful with carvings, and white statues of Saints, and dusky corners where single candles are burning.

"I will show you our Saint," says the little nun, as she leads the way to the place near the altar, where lies a wax figure, representing a beautiful young girl dead with a gash in her throat. "St. Aurelia," says the little nun in a whisper, "and the hair"—which is very long, shining, and curly—"was given by our sister St. Aurelia when she entered."

"Was it—was she—was the saint made here?" I enquire, in misery of uncertainty as to the proper pronoun.

"The head and hands and feet were sent from Paris," she responds, "but we made the body here and put it together, and all the embroidery of the dress was done here."

The embroidery is of gold on a robe of white satin, and a marvel of handiwork.

"Perhaps," says the little nun, "I can show you our other most precious relics." And she goes to see. Alas! she cannot show them to us—perhaps because we are heretics, and who knows what a heretic will do or say.

Just across the road from the Convent of Jesus and Mary stands a grim building with a very high thick stone wall. I have never seen so impassable a wall around a prison as this which confines inmates who have imposed a life sentence on themselves. The building is the worldly face of the cloistered cells of the Carmelites, and the wall is built about their garden. And this is the only Carmelite convent in America. In Spain, in France, in Italy there are others, but not on *this* continent. The Order has existed here since 1875 only. The money to establish it was given by a Madame Fr mont of Quebec, and the French Carmelite *fondatrice* who came from Paris is dead now. So are all of her sisters except three. The severity of their lives in our rigorous climate killed them. There are fifteen now cloistered here, but twelve are French-Canadian. You know, of course, what it means to take the vows of a Carmelite. It means the most literal renouncement of the world possible to a human being. The face of the Carmelite nun is never seen after her entrance except by her immediate relatives, and then only for half an hour once a month, through heavy gratings. Her hand is never touched save by her sisters. From behind the little door that is barred upon her on the day of parting with our pleasant world she never comes again. Her cell is of the barest; she sleeps on a mattress with one coverlet. Her diet is of the poorest, and meat never enters it. Her habit is of coarse brown cloth, with a veil of a similar colour and kind, and she wears sandals on her feet. Her occupation is prayer and penance, and the making of church decorations. She is a "favourite soul."

We ring, and the sound reverberates within, hollow and chill. A nun dressed like those of the convent opposite opens the door, and, after a whispered conference with our French friend, admits us. The hall we stand in is narrow, cold, and ill-ventilated, and we shiver as we pass along to a small, bare room with an opening in the wall about four feet square. From the iron bars which guard it project spikes half a foot long. On the other side of the opening is another barred network, and behind that hangs a black veil. The room is in semi-darkness, but we can read above the spikes and bars the words—

Au Carmel comme au jugement.

Dieu seul et moi.

They strike through the stillness upon one's consciousness like a text of half-comprehended truth. *Dieu seul et moi!* There is a ring of awful solemnity about that. This is where the Carmelite comes to get her pitiful sight of some one she loved in the days before she became a "favourite soul;" and these are the bars through which that loved one strains aching eyes for the tortured glimpse of the recluse. Through double bars—and then the tears! "Mark well and consider, all you who pass this way," runs a printed text upon the wall; "is there any sorrow like my sorrow?"

Yes, we may have speech with one of the nuns, the sister who let us in comes to tell us. This is by grace of the French lady, who is high in favour in her church. But not here. So we are conducted to another little room, where a circular shelf revolves in the wall for the admission of necessities to the hospital. Behind this stands the nun. Madame addresses her. We cannot. We have a kind of fear as to what we might say, our conversation being in the world. We shrink from the possible

profanation of the strange stillness that surrounds the life behind these thrice-mortared gray walls. But Madame does not shrink. She addresses the shelf with a sort of reverential gaiety, if there is such a thing, and enquires for the health of "*ma s ur*." And in tremulous tones the nun responds that she is very well—oh, very well, indeed, and is Madame well? How her voice shakes as they talk in French, Madame turning occasionally to tell us that the Superioress is very ill; that if we desire the prayers of the nun we may have them; that the garden has not been very successful this year! It is a great license, this of conversing with strangers behind a heavy partition, and she must be very, very mindful not to forget for an instant that these are not "favourite souls." And she can speak in English? Yes, but can we?

"Are you happy, *ma s ur*?" I falter.

"I am most happy," comes the answer in a quiet cadence.

"And when you die, *ma s ur*, where are you buried?" I query.

"In the vault below," she responded, and I fancy I do detect a trace of hopefulness in the way she says this.

Do they sell the things they make? Oh yes, and if we wish to buy, some will be put on the shelf. And presently a box of wax flowers is pushed slowly around—pansies and camellias and roses, white and red, exquisitely wrought. How much? For the roses five or six cents apiece; for the pansies three. And, after getting change for the price of our souvenirs, she is distressed that we will not take the two or three coppers that are due us.

It is late in the afternoon when we go again through the narrow hall to the door, yet we must have a look at the chapel on the other side. So through another long passage we follow our guide, and into the rather empty, dreary, and bare edifice, where a candle or two burn dimly, and we can just make out the figures of a few bead-telling worshippers. As we stand silent a sound—a song (?)—a dirge sweeps through the gloom from somewhere behind the altar and beyond the knowable. It sinks and swells in its inexpressible mournfulness, as waves might beat on a desolate shore. It is the call—the cry—the chant of the Carmelite nuns.

Montreal.

GARTH GRAFTON.

CONTEMPORARY LIFE AND THOUGHT IN CHINA.

A RESIDENT of Pekin has contributed to the *Contemporary* some valuable information concerning the Celestial Empire, of which we give the most important points:

AMONG the countries of the distant East, China holds the highest place in the estimation of the Western world. She will certainly keep the position she has won, and it becomes a duty for Western statesmen to make themselves acquainted with her history and resources. The combination of educated intelligence with vast population, of homogeneity of race with fertility of production, of excellence of climate with vast mineral resources, unite in giving her a unique position among Eastern nations.

The Marquis Tseng has told us in vigorous metaphor that China was always powerful, though she did not know it, and that she is now better acquainted than ever before with the realities of her position. She has many skilled diplomatists who know how to take advantage for her good of the mutual jealousies and fears of the European States. These men study telegrams, and read translated leaders from the *Times*. The viceroys and governors serve their country loyally, and rejoice in her prosperity; they are better statesmen than they are generals, and are beginning to enjoy Western politics as an interesting game of skill, in which they may take part with every prospect of success through that unimpassioned Oriental astuteness which is the gift of their race. Europe has six great Powers, America one, and Asia is now aspiring to be recognised, and is recognised, as having one great Power also. War has done China much good by making her sensible of her deficiencies, and showing her how she can best cope with foreign forces. She is now stronger than she was before, and she will become stronger yet; it has been proved too that Chinese soldiers can meet European soldiers on the field of battle, behave well, and oblige their opponents after hours of severe fighting to return to their ships worn out. She has now initiated an elaborate system of naval instruction so that her war-vessels will in future, it is to be hoped, be manned by more competent persons. But it is unsafe to prophesy. The Chinese fight better on shore than at sea, and they have not yet had a naval hero.

Although the imperial family is Manchoo, and new to China two centuries and a half ago, the patriotism of the viceroys and governors is undoubted; they are animated by a real love for the Government—a love which seems to survive undiminished the severe punishments to which they are, when in fault, sometimes exposed. There is positively no ground for questioning their loyalty, and as they are men of tried ability, who have passed through many years of service in inferior posts, by which they have acquired much official experience, they form a staff of useful public servants who keep the wheels of the State vehicle moving, and avert many a danger threatening the public welfare. Freedom of speech is discouraged. To talk politics in common life is not allowed. The well conducted citizen pays his taxes, attends to his own affairs, and avoids criticising the Government. If he goes to take a cup of tea in a large tea-shop, he sees written up in large characters, "Do not talk politics!" The daily newspaper, however, is forcing its way as an exciting novelty, and its compact dose of news, local and foreign, is growing into a necessity. But the old system is built upon the absence of political thought as a foundation, and it is considered that this abstinence from criticism of the Government is a duty. Passivity engenders loyalty, as in some countries ignorance is thought to be the mother of devotion. In China a prudent man does not call in question the wisdom of the powers that be. The ancient Emperors who ruled badly are