

Where Silence Reigns Supreme

or, the Trappists at St. Norbert

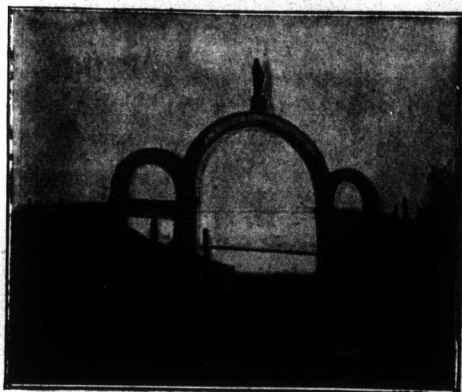
Specially written for The Western Home Monthly by J. D. A. Evans

As the writer walked through the village of St. Norbert, a bell was sounding from the buildings in a wood across the La Salle river. Its clang was solemn in the still air of a beautiful morning, March 21. Yet for in excess of twenty years the inhabitants of St. Norbert and its countryside on Red River have listened to the echo of the bell from its turret amidst the trees.

This bell is symbolical that The House of the Silent Community is here located.

At the western extremity of the trestle bridge crossing La Salle river in close adjacency to the railway station at St. Norbert, a gate opens into a wood of oaks and poplars. We walk along the pathway; in the immediate distance are observable various large buildings. A footbridge of primitive construction is swung from the high banks of the stream; the path continues up a steep bank; at the summit massive iron gates are noticeable. In proximity to this entrance stands a white frame house; we ascend the steps to its doorway, ring the bell.

the very outset of "Where silence reigns supreme" the writer will not be intruding upon the interest of the reader to remark that they who belong to the "Silent



Entrance to Trappists' Grounds at St. Norbert

Community" are men of whom it can be said with tense veracity, "I have overcome the world." The affairs of an exterior sphere concern the Trappist in no possible manner; from the grounds of the



Monastery Trappist, St. Norbert

In latter decades of the sixteenth century, La Trappe, an Englishman, whose surname is indicative of a French ancestry, founded an Order in which as with other communistic bodies of the Roman Church, specified tenets of observance merited membership. To-day the followers of the devout La Trappe from the Community beneath the most austere and rigid discipline of the many, very many religious bodies enumerated within the realms of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. In Canada two Houses only of this

monastery the whirl of street cars at St. Norbert is distinctly audible; he can gaze upon the tall buildings of Winnipeg, witness the smoke of its industries, but within the domain of the Trappist there is a peace, an atmosphere of serenity. He has forgotten the world, to him even its memory is unknown.

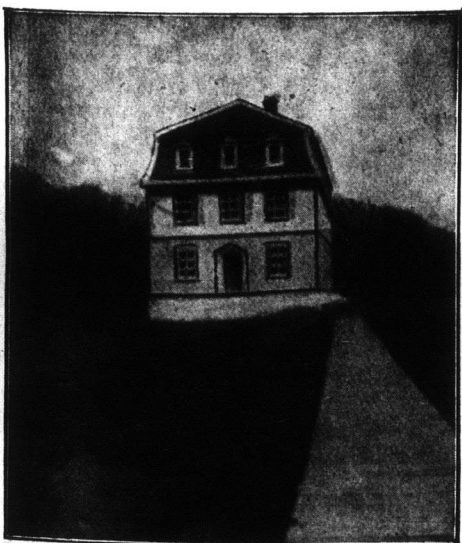
A knock at the door of the lodge at the iron gates. In response, an elderly man, who for twenty-two years has dwelt in the monastery, appears. He is garbed in the rough and simple dress of his Order; cowl, brown robe, girdle, moccasins. In English somewhat broken in expression, he bids the visitor enter. A superb collection of plants, several in bloom greets the eye; the Friar brings out chairs from the sitting room.

"You've come to look through the monastery," he remarks. "Yes, I will take you across to the office."

This visit did not constitute the writer's introduction to the "Abode of Silence." Upon two previous occasions he has walked through the scenes wherein sanctitude and labour play the prominent caste in the drama. There were, however, distinct alterations in the surroundings of the monastical environments.

"Come this way, please," remarked the lodge keeper as he opened the gate. "Lots of mud to-day, looks like spring time."

A flight of stone steps leads to the monastery entrance; the guide opens a door into a small reception room, then excuses himself momentarily. He returns followed in a few minutes by a monk clean shaven, the Friars are permitted to wear whiskers, dressed in robe of white material. This priest is Father Joseph, Secretary-treasurer of the Community; he is likewise one of the quintet



The Home of the Father Superior

Brotherhood are conducted; the major of these is located at Oka, near Montreal, that at St. Norbert was instituted in 1892. The parent home of the Trappist is situate at Citeaux in France; a few Houses for female adherents of the Order are existent, and one of such is conducted in the State of Pennsylvania, U.S.A. At

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