

SIXTY YEARS OF PROGRESS IN MONTREAL

(By Rev. Canon Ellegood.)



OLD Montreal,—well, yes, I ought to know something about it, seeing that I have been here since 1848. I think when I came first to Montreal years ago, the population of the city was 50,000. We had narrow streets, none of the modern conveniences, and all about the spot where the rectory of my church stands was country. There was little or nothing on Dorchester street; little or nothing west of this but open country; indeed, when this church was built, it was called "St. Cricket's in the Fields." This was for a double reason—first, because we played cricket back of the church, myself taking part in the game; and, second, because the church was veritably in the fields.

One night in the early spring of the year, while I was preaching, the sexton came to me and whispered that the church was surrounded by a flood; that the water and ice were rising; and what were we to do. People had a notion then that God sent the floods, just as they had a notion that He sent ship fever or smallpox. I warned the people as quickly as I could, brought the

service to a close, and got the people, as far as possible, accommodation to take them home. I had a friend with me, and as he and I were young and strong, we determined to try and make our way to high ground. The water was cold; the ice struck against our legs. Sometimes we were up to the neck. We got high and dry at last, and then I ran up to Dorchester street, where Mayor Rodier lived, and rang the bell and shouted at the top of my voice. His Worship wore a wig, and I shouted for him not to mind the wig, but to come down wigless—in any way, as the matter was urgent. When the Mayor came out, I told him that I wanted an order to the police to attend to the people. With the order I rushed to the police station, and then home and into a hot bath. Next day I was out passing around bread to the people.

Then there ensued the awful pestilence among the poor Irish immigrants at Point St. Charles. The poor people came out in an exhausted state after the famine in Ireland. They were huddled on board ship in a congested way. They landed weak, with the seeds of disease in them. They died like flies, of fever, dysentery, and "black" or confluent smallpox. When I first entered the sheds and saw a row of black faces, I said to the doctors: "For heaven's sake what are these? Are they wild animals?" "They are human beings," was the reply. Well, we all did our best, but what did it amount to? I saw them dying by the dozen, by the score. While I bent over to take a last message they died. While I held their hands they died. Ah, how well I remember good Father Dowd, a true Christian man,—a man who never spared himself, who went in and out among the people, ministering to their wants. Well, the bodies of the poor immigrants were thrown into a great pit, and over it was placed that big stone which is now to be seen on Patrick Square, close to the Wellington Bridge.

I remember well the burning

of the old Parliament Buildings on Haymarket Square. I was present and saw how the mob rotten-egged Lord Elgin. That reminds me that the officer in command of the troops guarding the Governor and maintaining order, was in full sympathy with those who were opposed to the Rebellion Losses Bill, and was not, I think, too strict with the mob. During the debate on this subject feeling ran high. Challenges were passed during the day preceding the burning of the buildings. But the duels did not come off, for the parliament was destroyed, and new agitators perturbed the public mind. The two great opponents in respect of this matter were Sir Allan McNab and the father of the Hon. Edward Blake. Sir Allan was opposed to the indemnification of the rebels, while Mr. Blake was in favor of it. Before the fire was out, the mob made a rush to the Champ de Mars, where the proposal was made to go out and fire Monklands, whereupon a man in the crowd—I won't name him—he is dead,—and close to whom I was standing—said: "Shame, shame, and Lady Elgin ill!" That had a calming and subduing effect.

Those were the days of unbounded hospitality. Social life is closer and warmer in a small place than in a big centre. There were many balls and parties. I remember one brilliant occasion when certain mammas with marriageable daughters had arranged a great ball to which the officers of the garrison were, of course, invited. The latter, for a trick, did not put in an appearance, and there was much consternation.

I remember when there was a creek running along Victoria Square and Craig Street; when a creek ran underneath the site of Christ Church Cathedral; when it was a sensation to take a train ride between Montreal and Lachine; and when I used the stage

coach on my way to Montreal from Concord.

With reference to McGill University, I may say that the original intention of Mr. McGill was that the institution should be Anglican in character. I am persuaded that this was the case, though I never heard it so stated officially. Of course, subsequent arrangements were made, which made the university denominational.

One time I was invited to a luncheon by Lord Stanley. A great many notable people were present, including the late Sir William Dawson. It was an appallingly funereal affair. Everybody, I suppose, remembered his greatness and his title. Anyway, not a word was said, or, if a word at all, nothing of worth. I noticed an Irish lady present who had a glint in her eye and this encouraged me to ask, in an impressive voice, of Sir William Dawson, if he was aware of the fact that Noah was an Irishman, and spoke the language. "An Irishman—dear me," said Sir William, seriously. "I never thought of that before." "Well, I can prove it to the satisfaction of any logical mind," I said. "Pray, do so, by all means," was the answer of Sir William, becoming interested. "Well, when the ark was about to rest, Noah espied a rat running over the floor, and shouted: 'A-ra-rat.'" Everybody roared, and that introduced a little human nature into the function. Sir William, in later years, suffered from ill health, and I suggested to Lady Dawson, one day, that she should encourage Sir William to play golf. I will never forget her look. "Sir William play golf," she said, with an air which meant,— "How could you suppose that so grave a person as Sir William could think of indulging in sport?"

Well, we have a large city now, and will have a larger. Great changes have taken place in my time.

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