

A RETREAT AT LA TRAPPE.

W I Scott II B in the Catholic World

On the picturesque shores of the River Ottawa, before it divides to embrace within its mighty arms the island of Montreal, there stands, nestling in among the Laurentian Hills, the Trappist Monastery of Notre Dame du Lac des Deux Montagnes. The nearest village is Oka, about three miles away, conspicuous from the river by its pretty church and seminary, monuments to the zeal of the good Sulpician fathers, and its Stations of the Cross, planted on the steep and rugged mountain-side by the early missionaries, and still visited yearly by thousands of pious French Canadian pilgrims. Coming from Ontario, where everything is so new, one is impressed and even overawed by the antiquity of the Oka mission, with its parish register running regularly back for over two centuries, its silver statue of the Virgin and Child, presented to this very mission by Louis XIV himself, and its numerous old French paintings, sent here for preservation from the vandals of the French Revolution. But at the monastery, where some twelve years ago all was in a state of nature, and where the present buildings are scarcely more than two years old, one is nevertheless carried back by the life one sees to an antiquity compared with which the oldest records of the mission are but yesterday—back for twelve hundred years before the first Sulpician grounded his canoe on the shore of the Ottawa; back far into the dawn of Christianity, into the beautiful ages of faith!

I had frequently heard of the monastery on the shores of the Lake of Two Mountains, and had formed a vague idea that a visit to it would be likely to prove interesting; but it was left for a chance journey of pleasure in the summer to bring this about.

August of that year found a party, of whom I was one, encamped on an island in the Ottawa not far from Oka, and a trip to the monastery was naturally looked forward to as one of the chief features of our visit. Accordingly, one beautiful summer morning we set out in our canoes, and after a paddle of five miles arrived at Oka village, where we easily obtained conveyances to carry us on to our destination. Arriving there we saw before us a long, narrow, two storied wooden building standing in the centre of a very considerable vegetable garden, every part of which, even to the refuse-heap, was neatness itself; and where might be seen, here and there, a white or brown-robed figure patiently laboring at his silent task, but with a look of perfect peace and contentment shining from his countenance, such as is not often found outside the cloister.

We were received by the "guest-master," or monk charged with the reception and entertainment of visitors, and were by him shown over the building, our innumerable inquiries being answered with a patience and good-nature surprising when one remembers that the ordeal must be for him one of constant recurrence. For here let me say that hospitality is a traditional characteristic of the order, and one right royally carried out at the present day. Whether your visit extend for hours, days, or weeks you are most welcome, and the best that the monastery can afford is at your disposal. In the new stone monastery, of which I shall speak presently, one whole wing, called the hospice, is set apart for guests; and the first question asked by the porter is, "How long do you intend to stay?"—not, as one might suppose, in an un hospitable spirit, but with a view to the making of immediate preparations for your accommodation. Nor is the hospitality of the monks by any means confined to Catholics; all are indeed welcome, and I may mention that a

well-known Anglican clergyman of extreme High Church views, and himself somewhat of an ascetic, occasionally retires there for a week of prayer and mortification, and, not content with the ordinary rule prescribed for guests who are making a retreat, conforms rigorously during his stay to the severe rule of the Trappists themselves.

Probably the first thing that strikes one on entering the monastery is the bareness of the rooms and walls. If we except the rooms set apart for guests, which are comfortably furnished, there is scarcely even a chair or table to be seen, and not a picture, save that in the cloister there is a set of Stations of the Cross of the very simplest and plainest pattern. But even more striking still is the quaintness of everything one sees—the wooden latches to the doors, the wooden spoons and forks in the refectory, the carved wooden stalls in the little chapel, and, most picturesque of all, the enormous leather and brass-bound breviaries, with the lines of the chant nearly an inch wide, and some of them printed entirely by hand by means of stencil-plates.

As the old wooden monastery through which we were then shown has since, thanks to the untiring exertions of the monks, been replaced by a handsome stone structure more in keeping with the growing needs of the rapidly-increasing community, it will be more to the point to describe the latter than the former. The monastery when completed will form a hollow square enclosing a considerable courtyard, but at present only two of the sides and a portion of the third have been erected. Of these the western wing forms the hospice already alluded to, while the central and eastern portions are occupied by the monks themselves. The remaining wing will be devoted to a handsome chapel, or rather church when the funds at the disposal of the monastery will permit of its erection. Meanwhile a temporary chapel in the upper story of the east wing is used. The three great centres of the monastic life within the building are the chapel, the cloister, and the chapter. The cloister, the study of the monks, is a long, narrow room or hallway running around the three sides of the building and looking out on the enclosed courtyard already referred to. The chapter, the official meeting place of the community, is a square room forming a sort of annex to the chapel, and bare of furniture save for a wooden bench fixed around the walls, and a rough wooden throne or seat in the centre for the abbot.

At one side of the main building stand ample and extensive barns and stables devoted to the accommodation of the stock, of which the monks possess an exceedingly fine show, and to the storing of the produce of the farm. On the other side, turned by a picturesque little mountain stream, are grist and saw mills, for the community supply themselves with both flour and lumber. There are also creameries, cheese-presses, and wine-vats, besides other outbuildings, the whole forming quite an imposing array. At the entrances to all the buildings are affixed notices to the effect that women will, under no circumstances, be admitted, this forming the one exception to the universal hospitality of the monks. From the enumeration of their outbuildings it will be evident that the Trappists are farmers, and support themselves by the sale of the produce of their farm. And excellent farmers they are. I have been told that in the time that they have been at Oka they have worked quite a change in the appearance of the whole countryside, not alone within the limits of their own demesne, but likewise in the farms of the inhabitants for miles around, who have adopted their methods and followed their example with most gratifying results. That their example is worthy of imitation

will be evident from the merest glance at their neat and well kept fields, their trim and regular stone fences, and the marked absence of waste and rubbish from about their premises, to say nothing of the excellence of their stock, and in fact of all the several products of their farm. The success they have met with will be the better appreciated when I say that twelve years ago they came to Oka, a party of ten without money or capital of any kind. From the Sulpicians they obtained a free grant of about one thousand acres of land, but almost entirely uncultivated and even unenclosed, and so rough as to make profitable cultivation appear little short of an impossibility. Charity brought them a few head of cattle, some seed and food for immediate use, and from this humble beginning they have grown to a community of some sixty souls, occupying a monastery which cost over eighty thousand dollars, having about five hundred acres cleared and under cultivation, over two hundred head of cattle, besides horses, sheep, pigs and poultry, and employing during harvest-time about sixty or seventy hands in addition to the members of the community. They are, moreover, at present arranging for the establishment of an offshoot at Lake St. John, P.Q., where a considerable tract of land has been donated by the government.

Although our visit lasted only about an hour, it created in me so deep an impression that before it was over I had fully made up my mind to take the first opportunity of returning and spending a few days of quiet retreat in the holy solitude of La Trappe. What a beautiful thing is a retreat!—a time devoted exclusively to prayer, and to a careful examination of ourselves and of how we are progressing in the great business for which we were sent into the world. Yet to those who have never spent any time in a religious house the real beauty and value of a retreat must be largely unknown. Many of the secular confraternities, happily so common among us, hold annually what is called "a retreat," but which is more properly a short "mission." Incalculable, indeed, is the good brought about through the instrumentality of the mission; yet to my mind no mission, however eloquent the preacher, is capable of producing the lasting impression that is frequently the result of a retreat in a religious house. For in the latter case one is entirely cut off from home, business, friends, and daily avocations, and has, in short, for the time being severed every tie that binds him to the world. The advantage of such seclusion for the purpose of entering into one's self is obvious.

It was some months before time would permit of my carrying out my intention, but at length, in November, I wrote asking whether I could spend a few days at "Notre Dame du Lac." The answer was not long in coming. "Our doors and our hearts," they wrote, "stand open to receive you"; and so indeed I found it during the two retreats I have since had the happiness of making there, one in the old wooden monastery and one a year later in the handsome stone building I have just described. And it is in the hope that some among my readers may be induced to share that happiness that I have essayed a description of my experiences.

Before, however, attempting to describe those days of holy quiet, let me say a few words respecting the order whose guest I was.

Many are the errors passing current even among well informed Catholics regarding the life at La Trappe, and of these one, perhaps, of the commonest is the idea that the Trappist rule is a novelty, tolerated indeed by the church, but, owing to its extreme severity, refused the formal approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The rule followed by the Trappists is the oldest of all rules—first both in time and excellence, the model of every religious legislator, the rule laid down for his followers by St. Benedict at Monte Cassino nearly fourteen hundred years ago. The visitor to Oka, at the end of the nineteenth century, sees realized before his eyes the life of Saint Benedict and his companions at the beginning of the sixth. How vividly does this thought bring home to us the lasting good that, under the grace of God, one man may accomplish—Saint Benedict after fourteen centuries still living in his works! Who shall be able to calculate the extent of sanctity and self-mortification, of glory to God and peace to men, born of his rule during the long course of fourteen centuries?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Many a Mickle Makes a Muckle.

A story told of the customs of the old Drexel banking company gives a hint of the secret of their accumulation of wealth which is worth noting.

A Mr. Koons, employed as supercargo by a shipping house, on his return from a voyage to the West Indies, brought back a considerable quantity of Spanish coins in silver and gold tied up in small bags, as was the custom, and had them carried to the old banking office of the Drexels on Third Street for sale. The bags were emptied out on the counter and the coins carefully counted and set aside in separate piles, in order to calculate the correct sum for which the bank check should be drawn. After this was done old Mr. Drexel took from inside his desk one of the feathered quill pens then generally used, and, with a sheet of white paper, he slowly swept off that portion of the counter upon which the coin had been handled, and as carefully shook the paper into a tin box. Mr. Koons could not see any dust on the paper, so he smilingly asked Mr. Drexel what was gained by the sweepings, and was greatly astonished at the old gentleman's kindly reply: "Why, young man, it brings me in a clean profit of \$1,000 to \$1,500 a year." Mr. Koons has never forgotten the incident, nor the impression it made that the Drexel boys were being disciplined by their father into the close kind of thrift and attention to the little saving economies in their business methods.

Worthy of Mark.

A business man in New York one evening saw his typewriter-girl dining at Delmonico's with a nice-looking old gentleman whom he had never seen. He found next morning that the girl was with her father who was rather well off, and that she worked because her life at home was very dull and she liked the variety and excitement of the office, and the extra money, with which to go to the theatre, buy flowers and gloves, and dine now and then at Delmonico's. The business man gave her a week's notice at once and gave her place to a girl who really needed the wages.

This was only fair. Do not go to work unless you absolutely need the money. If you do, you will be crowding out some poor girl who does need it. Worse than that is working for low pay because you can afford to. The girls who live at home are partly supported by their people do lots of harm by working for low wages and so cutting down the rate of pay for women in general.

Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup stands at the head of the list for all diseases of the throat and lung. It acts like magic in breaking up a cold. A cough is soon subdued, tightness of the chest is relieved, even the worst case of consumption is relieved, while in recent cases it may be said never to fail. It is a medicine prepared from the active principles or virtues of several medicinal herbs, and can be depended upon for all pulmonary complaints.