

Detroit in the Past and Present

A Sketch of the Convention City by Rev. Nehemiah Boynton, D.D.



SO long ago as the year 1710, Detroit was pictured by the Jesuit missionaries, who with rare consecration and devotion sought the salvation of the original citizens the Indians, as "the most pleasant and plentiful spot in all America." The lapse of centuries and the development of the city have confirmed the testimony of the

ancient observation, and to-day it is the pride of the Queen City of the Straits so that her devoted children, the world over, sing of her as Kipling sung of Bombay:

"Surely in toil or fray
Under an alien sky,
Comfort is it to say,
'Of no mean city am I.'"

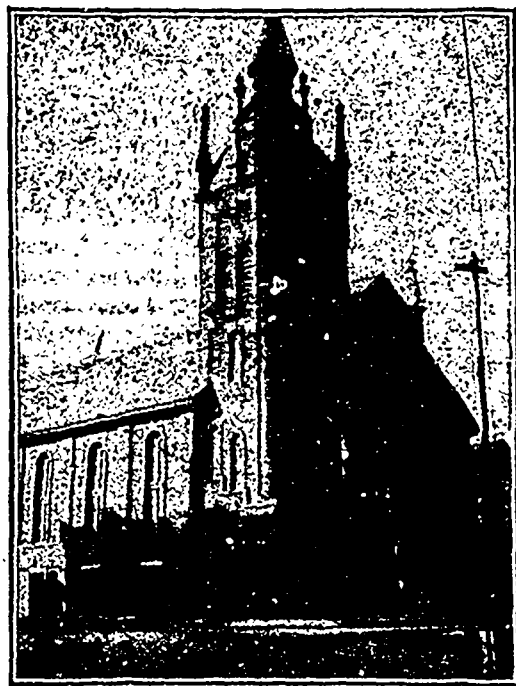
Detroit owes its existence to the discriminating judgment and persuasive power of Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac, who, sent to have charge of the post at Mackinac, saw, with his eagle eye, the ideal advantages of Detroit both as a favorable location for fur-trading, and also for securing the co-operation in time of need of friendly Indians. His enthusiastic representations to the French authorities of the "living and crystal waters" of the river, of the orchards loaded with luscious fruit, and of the "ambitious vine which has never wept under the pruning-knife"; of the great forests, plentifully supplied with game, and the strategic value of the region, so impressed these worthy gentlemen that Cadillac was empowered to fulfil his wishes and found the post.

But if it owes its existence to a chivalric man, Detroit owes its preservation to an Indian girl. More than sixty years after the founding of the town, Pontiac, the great chief, fighting for his home against the encroachments of the white man, had laid a cunning plot to massacre the inhabitants of the post at Detroit. An Indian girl disclosed the conspiracy to Major Gladwyn, commander of the garrison, and enabled him to check the awful atrocity which Pontiac had proposed. The Historical Society of Michigan has a fine painting representing the Indian girl in-

forming Major Gladwyn of the plot. It is almost a pity that the girl does not drop from history at this impressive moment, but tradition will have it that Pontiac, in his anger, gave her a severe beating; that the poor girl, even then, did not die, but lived, acquiring the liquor habit, and one day, when intoxicated, fell into a kettle of boiling maple-sap, and in this very terrible and prosaic manner ended her life! Alas, that glory is so near our dust!

From a trading-post, the city has grown to be in size one of the first dozen in America, while in the solidity of her commercial institutions, the comfort of her homes, and the quality of her higher life, she is a worthy representative of the best achievement of our republic in its endeavor to solve not only the political but the human problem. The conditions which make for comfortable living—healthy climate, abundant and cheap food supply, inexpensive rent, diverse employments, worthy education, and wholesome moral sentiment—are met as satisfactorily as in any city in our country.

Situated upon the bank of her wonderful river, on whose calm bosom floats each year a greater



CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DETROIT,
Headquarters for Canada and District of Columbia.

tonnage than any single port in the world can boast, Detroit claims a population of more than 300,000, and a diversified industry of more than 2000 plants. Her mammoth car-works, and stove manufactories, her world-renowned chemical laboratory, her unique seed-house, send her