

THE BELL OF ST. REGIS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MAPLE LEAVES."

Whoever turns over the early annals of Canada will be struck with the romantic incidents which at every turn open on the view; feats of endurance—of cool bravery—christian heroism, in its grandest phases—acts of savage treachery, of the darkest dye—deeds of blood and revenge most appalling—adventurous escapes by forest, land, and flood, which would furnish material for fifty most fascinating romances. No greater error ever was than that of believing that few reliable records exist of the primitive times of Canada. Had we not the diaries of Jacques Cartier, Alphonse de Xaintonge, the voyages of Champlain, Charlevoix, DuCreux, Bressani, &c.; we still would have that admirable *Journal of the Jesuits*, kept up, day by day, for so many years, containing such a minute record of every event which transpired in New France. The Jesuits' *Journal* is likely to remain the great fountainhead of Canadian History. One can readily enter into the meaning of one of our late Governors, the Earl of Elgin, who, in one of his despatches to the Home Government, in speaking of the early days of the colony, described them as "the heroic times of Canada;" the expression was as eloquent as it was beautiful. There is but little doubt that our descendants will be just as familiar with the beauties of Canadian history as the great bulk of the present generation are ignorant of them. The gradual diffusion of knowledge, the spirit of research and improvement to which everything tends in the Dominion, mark that period as not very far distant. D'Iberville, Mile. De Verchere. Latour, Dollard des Ormeaux, Lambert Closse, may yet, some day or other, under the magic wand of a Canadian Scott, be invested with the same bright halo of glory which surrounds, in the eyes of Scotia's sons, a Flora McIvor, a Jeannie Deans, a Claverhouse, or a Rob Roy. But more on this theme hereafter. For the present, let us select an incident of our border warfare, and tell of the tribulations and peregrinations of the Bell of St. Regis.

We shall not do our readers the injustice to suppose that any one of them is not minutely conversant with all the particulars of the great Lachine massacre, perpetrated by the Iroquois (the allies of the New Englanders), on the 25th April, 1689, a few miles only from the centre of the spot where now stands the proud city of Mount Royal. The scalping, burning, and disembowelling of some 200 men, women, and children, and the entire conflagration of their once happy homes, during a profound peace, and without a moment of warning, was certainly a crime to call down on the Indian tribes the fiercest retribution, especially when it became known that these hideous butcheries were to have been repeated at Quebec and Three Rivers, to please their New England allies,—a consummation which a most merciful Providence alone averted. Marauding excursions on both sides of the border were the order of the day. One of the most remarkable expeditions of these days was that of Rouville, undertaken shortly after the English had ravaged, by fire and sword, the country of the Abenakis Indians. M. de Vaudreuil sent, during the winter of 1704, 250 men, under the command of Hertel de Rouville, a Huguenot, who, followed by his four brothers, bade fair to replace his brave father, then too stricken in years to share the dangers of such a service. The expedition ascended Lake Champlain, and, by way of Onion river, soon reached Connecticut

river, which it followed over the ice until it reached the habitation nearest to the Canadian border, Deerfield. This place was surrounded by some outer works of defence, which the snow covered, and Governor Dudley had placed there about twenty soldiers to assist the inhabitants in defending themselves. Rouville invested the place, unperceived, during the night of the 29th February. Guards had been patrolling the streets during that night, but had retired to rest towards morning. Two hours before day-break, the French and their Indian allies, not hearing any stir, scaled the walls, and, descending into the settlement, surprised the inhabitants, still asleep. No resistance was offered. The place surrendered. Forty-seven persons were slaughtered, a large number of prisoners taken, and the settlement given to the flames. A few moments after sunrise, Rouville was retracting his steps towards the Canadian frontier, taking with him 112 prisoners. Pursuit was organized against the spoilers, but without success. Rouville escaped, with the loss of three Frenchmen and some savages, but he himself was wounded. The party was twenty-five days returning, and had for provisions merely the wild animals they killed in the chase. The Rev. Mr. Williams, Pastor of Deerfield, and his daughter, were amongst the prisoners brought to Canada. Several of the young girls were placed in the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, and at Three Rivers. Miss Eunice Williams, daughter to the Pastor of Deerfield, having subsequently married a christianized Iroquois, settled at Sault St. Louis.* Such are the outlines, furnished us by historians, of this memorable Canadian raid. But there are some unwritten particulars of interest handed down to us, chiefly by tradition,—such, for instance, as the peregrinations of the Bell of St. Regis, or rather of Sault St. Louis. We find this incident alluded to in a correspondence, in the *Eric Despatch*, dated "Massena Springs, 24th July, 1865:"—"St. Regis contains a small Roman Catholic Church, on the Canadian side of the line, built about the year 1700. When completed, the priest informed the Indians that a bell was highly important to their worship, and they were ordered to collect funds sufficient to purchase one. They obeyed, and the money was sent to France for the purpose. The French and English were then at war. The bell was shipped, but the vessel that conveyed it fell into the hands of the English, and was taken to Salem in 1703. The bell was purchased for a small church at Deerfield, on the Connecticut river, the pastor of which was the Rev. Mr. Williams. The priest of St. Regis heard of the destination of his bell, and, as the Governor of Canada was about to send an expedition against the colonies of New England, he exhorted the Indians to accompany it, and get possession of the bell." The particulars of the Rouville expedition are then given. "The only house left standing at Deerfield was that of Capt. Seldon, which the assailants themselves occupied after securing the prisoners. It was still standing near the centre of the village, in 1850. The bell was conveyed through the forest to Lake Champlain, to a spot where Burlington now stands, and there they buried it with the benedictions of Father Nicholas, the priest of St. Regis, who accompanied them. Thus far they had carried it by means of poles, upon their shoulders. They hastened home, and returned in early spring, with horses and sledge, to convey the sacred bell to its destination. The Indians of the village had never heard the sound of a bell, and powerful was the impression on their minds, when its deep

tones, louder and louder, broke the silence of the forest as it approached the village at evening, suspended upon a cross-piece of timber, and rung continually by the delighted carriers. It was hung in a frame tower, separate from the church, with solemn ceremonies. Some years after it was removed to the tower of the church. The old bell was cracked by some means, and last year it was sent to Troy, N. Y., and the material re-cast into the new one which they now have."

To an inquiry, addressed by me to the Rev. R. C. clergyman of St. Regis anent the bell, in order to reply to a question submitted by a member of the Historical Society of Portland (Mr. Davis), I have received the following courteous answer:—

"St. Regis, 11th Nov., 1867.

"J. M. LEMOINE, Esq., Quebec.

"Sir,—The history of the aforesaid bell is correct, with the exception that it was brought back by the Indians of Sault St. Louis, for which mission it was destined, and not to St. Regis. Sault St. Louis is a village situate on the shore opposite to Lachine. The version in favor of St. Regis was propagated in the United States by a young lady who wrote a legend, in verse, on this famous bell. I have forgotten the name of the writer. The best proof that it could not be St. Regis is, that St. Regis was founded in 1759 by a Jesuit, with a party of Indians from Sault St. Louis; and that in 1804 it was but a wilderness where the Indians came to hunt; so that this bell was conveyed to its place of destination, Sault St. Louis—now known as Caughnawaga, which is a corruption for Kaknawaka, which means "The Rapids"—about 55 years before the first settlements at St. Regis.

"Yours truly,
"(Signed,) FRS. MARCOUX, Ptre."

*Ferland's History of Canada.

A NEW INSTRUMENT OF DEATH.

Several cases have recently occurred at New York and Brooklyn where windows have been pierced and persons shot by bullets without the usual noise incident to the discharge of a gun or pistol. A correspondent of New York papers states that these bullets are not shot from air guns, as has been generally supposed, but that there is a new kind of gun now sold, that somewhat resembles the old cross guns, except that instead of the arrow or bullet being propelled by the elasticity of a bow, it is in this case accomplished by the equally forcible elasticity of an India rubber strap. A bullet placed in this gun and the strap being forcibly drawn back and then unloosened by a trigger, its sudden relaxation gives a force to the bullet but little inferior to the expansion of the suddenly released gases of gunpowder; and this can be done without any greater noise than is created by the bow gun as its bow is released. If these statements are true, these weapons will prove very dangerous in the hands of assassins, as the absence of any report at the time of shooting will greatly facilitate the escape of the persons using them.

MILITARY.—Major Wilkie, Lt. Boyfield, Ensign Yard, 1 drummer, 42 men of the 29th Regt. are ordered to Canada to join the service companies. Lt. General Sir John Michel (lately in chief command in Canada) will be appointed Colonel of his old regiment, the 6th, vice Sir Charles Gore, deceased. General Michel formerly served in and commanded the 6th Regiment, and is now Colonel-in-Chief of the 86th Regiment.