

bryo saint was willing to sacrifice God's good gifts of happiness to this idolized ideal gift, of whose value she comprehended absolutely nothing.

When she left the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, where she had been educated, Mademoiselle Le Ber was the richest heiress in Canada, having a dower of 50,000 *écus*. Her parents had formed ambitious hopes for their only daughter, but possessed by a passion which was partly vanity, partly enthusiasm, and partly genuine devotion, she was entirely occupied by other thoughts. She had been deeply interested in the construction of the Bonsecours Church by Sister Bourgeoys in 1678. About the same time several of her cousins entered the Congregation as nuns, and the death of a young companion who had already assumed the habit of a "religious," confirmed her purpose. So rich a prize as the heiress required skilful and delicate treatment. Her spiritual director, M. Segue-not, a priest of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, did not encourage the young girl to take the veil. She had better take a vow of chastity for five years, and, living entirely secluded from the world, holding no communication even with her own parents, she could emulate the fame of St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony and Ste. Mary of Egypt. The authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada were decidedly of the opinion that such extraordinary virtue practised by a person of condition must prove most edifying to the colony, and the idea that she should become a public victim of penitence, an expiatory offering to God for the salvation of her country-people—above all, for the sanctification of young girls—was eagerly seized upon by the fair enthusiast. The hearts of the parents were rent by conflicting emotions; on the one hand their child was entirely lost to them; on the other, what a gratification to spiritual pride that their daughter should be revered as a saint. They were confidently assured that they were expected to serve as models to all the parents of New France, and that they would be honoured as was Abraham for his sacrifice of Isaac.

Mademoiselle Le Ber entered upon her new vocation in no mild, mediocre sort of way; she threw into it a vigorous force, an exuberance of youthful extravagance. She provided herself with a horse hair shirt and belt. She ate the food left by the servants, and that only when it had become unfit for human nourishment. The ambition of spiritual vanity, soaring higher than is possible when personal pride lies at the heart of the effort, there were still steeper heights of virtue to be ascended. When the ascetic had been secluded for two years her mother was attacked by fatal illness, and, with the most complacent approbation, the Christian heroine's biographer chronicles the fact that though the sound of Madame Le Ber's dying groans penetrated to her daughter's chamber, the latter resolutely denied herself the privilege of attending her parent's deathbed.

When the five years over which her vow had extended had expired, M. Le Ber, who had been left with three young sons, endeavoured to induce his daughter to assume her natural position in his home, but the uninteresting duties of everyday life appeared tame and colourless in comparison with that glorious ideal, the edification of the colony, and the glamour of that paramount attraction inspired her to take a vow of perpetual seclusion, poverty and chastity. In the fifteen years during which she lived secluded in her Father's house Jeanne Le Ber was never seen but once. Her younger brother, Jean Le Ber du Chesne, had been dangerously wounded in a skirmish with the English and their Indian allies which took place between Laprairie and Chambly, August, 1691, and was carried home to die. Such accidents were of common occurrence in those days, but Jacques Le Ber was a man of mark among his own people, and Sisters Bourgeoys and Barbier immediately repaired to the desolate home. The sisters were rendering the last cares to the corpse when they were startled by the apparition of a woman who, wan, haggard, tearless, stood gazing down intently at the dead lad, and then disappeared in utter silence. The nuns were awed by the tragic spectacle of a mortal soul, cut off from all sources of natural hope and interest, yet firmly bound to its heritage of human woe. The very next day, in memory of his son, M. Le Ber donated a farm at Point St. Charles as a foundation for a general hospital. According to the Indian customs, a savage taken prisoner was given to the bereaved father to replace the son whom he had lost. "This man was afterwards converted, and followed his master in a campaign against the Iroquois in 1693, in hope of preaching Christianity to his country-people." Death, and not success, was his destiny. M. Le Ber writes: "Our savage, who was given me in place of my son Du Chêne, not being able to keep up with our people on account of his family, among them children and old people, whom he was bringing, the enemy fell upon and killed him. I regret much the death of this brave man."

In 1694 a new sea captivated the imagination of the enthusiastic Jeanne. She decided upon giving the sisters of the Congregation the money to build their new church if they would agree to provide her with a cell behind the altar in which she could seclude herself for the remainder of her days. The nuns, with that mingling of shrewdness and enthusiasm which is so eminently characteristic of them, were delighted to get the money, and also to contribute to the edification of the colony. The cell, which was to extend the whole length of the building, was to be ten to twelve feet deep, and was to be divided into three stories. The ground floor was to be used as a species of sacristy. In the panel of the door a sort of movable grating was placed, through which the recluse could confess and receive

the communion. A second door opened into the garden, so that her food could be brought to her without being carried through the church. Her cell was reached by a tiny staircase, and her couch was placed beside the partition that separated it from the tabernacle containing the host. In the upper story were kept her work materials. The original deed, embodying these conditions, drawn by Basselt, a notary, signed by Dollier de Casson, Superior of the Seminary, and the principal nuns of the Congregation, may still be seen in the registrar's office, Montreal.

With a keen eye to scenic effect, a procession, as imposing as the resources of Ville Marie would permit, was organized to conduct Mademoiselle Le Ber to her new abode. The ceremonies were arranged with pomp and state; there were lights blazing on the altar, there was chanting of litanies and intoning of Psalms, the curious and eager spectators all striving to obtain a glimpse of the frail, hollow-eyed creature who shivered in the open air and sunshine, and shrank from the breath and swaying movement of the crowd. The broken-hearted father was carried away fainting from the church door, but in the picturesque possibilities of saintship his desolation was but a minor consideration, and appears to have attracted very little consideration.

Fasts, vigils and mortifications were now redoubled. The solitary slept upon a mattress that was never shaken, and endured as much cold as it was possible to bear without actually allowing herself to freeze. She listened to the mass with her arms extended in the form of a cross, and took all her meals on her knees. During the silence and solitude of night she crept down to the cold and empty church to hold vigil there. During the day she occupied herself in working at vestments and ornaments for the chapel. A gorgeous arrangement of silver tissue, consisting of an apron for the altar front, a chasuble (a kind of cope) and tunic for the priest, all richly embroidered, are still preserved in the church of Notre Dame, which are the work of Mademoiselle Le Ber. It is a strange circumstance that her solitude was not blessed by the ecstatic delusions that so often form the solace of visionaries of vivid imagination and strong religious susceptibilities, but we are told that for the last twenty years of her life she suffered much from dulness and barrenness of soul. At the desire of her confessor, she received her father twice a year, but during his last illness she never expressed the slightest desire to see him. Her cousin, Anne Barroy, who afterwards became a nun of the Congregation, waited upon her. If she required anything she left a note upon her window, and if any communication was addressed to her she sent it to her confessor without reading it.

In 1711 the English directed an expedition against Canada. A fleet started to attack Quebec, and 3,000 men left New York with the intention of taking Montreal. Ville Marie was at this time defended by palisades of stakes, and had no means of resisting the artillery with which the invaders were said to be liberally provided. The consternation of the little settlement was general and intense. All eyes turned, with something of Gallic light-heartedness still mingling with the poignant distress of the moment, towards the cell which sheltered the victim who had devoted herself as an expiatory offering for her country. Anne Barroy was told to acquaint her cousin with the peril that threatened the colony.

"If the English should have a favourable wind, and arrive at Quebec at such a time, all would be over for the colony."

How strangely the clamour of dread and anxiety, the multitudinous echoes of human life, must have thrilled in the silent cloister, causing strange memories to vibrate into vivid consciousness!

"No, sister," responded the hermit, "the Holy Virgin will take care of this country. She is the guardian of it; there is nothing to fear."

Jeanne gave her cousin a picture of the Virgin, upon which she had written a prayer of her own composition, to be fastened upon a barn in the country owned by the sisters, to protect it from harm. As soon as this fact was noised abroad, the whole colony was immediately animated by a vehement desire to obtain exactly such charms against evil; and when Mademoiselle Le Ber, from humility, refused to write any more prayers, some enterprising sinner, who particularly coveted a talisman, stole the original.

After a hasty consultation, it was decided that the Baron de Longueuil should start out to meet the enemy, lying in ambush at Chambly, to attack the English as they passed. Of a piece of linen upon which her brother Pierre had painted a portrait of the Virgin Mademoiselle Le Ber made a banner, and wrote upon it the following inscription: "Our foes place their confidence in their arms; we put ours in the Queen of Angels, whom we invoke. She is terrible as an army ranged in battle. Through her protection we hope to vanquish our enemies." In the parish church of Notre Dame M. de Belmont blessed this standard in the presence of all the people. It is easy to imagine the scene. The surging sea of eager faces, all turned towards the brilliant glow of the high altar, as though therein lay their hope. Priests and traders, hardy *coureurs des bois* and sun-gilt children of the forest, all united in the extremity of the common danger. The women, distraught by haunting fears or rapt in the heroism of some finer purpose, all hushed and awed as they regarded the little band of heroes, who for faith and country had sunk all egotistical considerations. One can fancy the partings in the agitated urgency, the stress and hurry of the hour.

The hopes of the Canadians, wild and vague as they might be, were realized, not through any efforts of their own, but through the agency of nature. During the night

of September 23 a violent tempest arose. Seven of the largest vessels of the English fleet went to pieces on the rocks, a great number of bodies were cast up by the waves, among them two entire companies of the Queen's Guard, who were recognized by their uniforms. A quantity of spoil was thrown upon the shore, which a Canadian historian quaintly congratulates himself "enriched the country." When the English heard of this disaster, the land army immediately abandoned the expedition, and the day they returned to Boston a fire broke out that consumed eighty-four houses. The Canadians appear to have exulted in these catastrophes with a supreme conviction that Providence, for their especial benefit, had permitted the uncircumcised Philistines, hip and thigh. "We give thanks to God for the visible protection he has accorded the colony," writes M. de Vaudreuil, and M. de Belmont alludes to their deliverance as "the greatest miracle that has happened since the time of Moses."

The Le Ber family proved most substantial benefactors to the community of the Congregation. Pierre Le Ber furnished the stone required for the construction of their church. By will he left the community 10,000 livres, and his heart was buried in the chapel which had so long been his sister's abode. Mademoiselle Le Ber gave 3,000 livres as a fund to found a perpetual adoration of the Host, for a daily mass 8,000 livres, and 18,000 livres, the interest of which was to educate seven poor girls, orphans to be selected in preference. They were to be taught all the ordinary duties of housework, also to sew, knit and read; the art of writing was not considered necessary.

As though her task were accomplished, very soon after Jeanne Le Ber had made over all her property to the sisters she was attacked by dangerous illness, and died October 3, 1714. The body was exposed in the Church of the Congregation, where she was afterwards interred with great pomp and ceremony.

"Her poor rags were distributed, even to her straw shoes," says Mère Juchereau. "Everyone who could get anything belonging to her considered themselves fortunate, and revered them as relics. Many persons afflicted with different maladies touched her bier with faith and respect, and are now assured that she has cured them."

Mademoiselle Le Ber's tomb bears the following inscription in French: "Here rests the venerable Sister Jeanne Le Ber, benefactress of this house, who, having lived fifteen years in her Father's house, passed twenty in retreat here. She died October 3, 1714, aged 52 years."

BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

Montreal.

AMONG THE ORCHARDS.

ALREADY in the dew-wrapped vineyards dry
Dense weights of heat press down. The large bright drops
Shrink in the leaves. From dark acacia-tops
The nut-hatch flings his short reiterate cry;
And ever as the sun mounts hot and high,
Thin voices crowd the grass. In soft long strokes
The wind goes murmuring through the mountain oaks;
Faint wefts creep out upon the blue and die.

I hear far in among the motionless trees—
Shadows that sleep upon the shaven sod—
The thud of dropping apples. Reach on reach
Stretch plots of perfumed orchard, where the bees
Murmur among the full-fringed golden rod,
Or cling half-drunken to the rotting peach.

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF WOMEN.*

THE differences of opinion that have complicated the question of the Higher Education of Women recall the remark of a thoughtful writer, that in the actual condition of humanity, errors and misconceptions are the natural accompaniments of the process through which truth is brought to light. To this general truth, the question of the Higher Education of Women forms no exception; and perhaps the cause has suffered from the mistakes of its friends, scarcely less than from those of its enemies. The main struggle, however, has been fought, and even it is now generally conceded that there is no reason why studious young women should not have free access to all the advantages of systematic and thorough training that are open to studious young men. There are still some who, either from misconception or from a strange and slowly dying prejudice against a thoroughly educated womanhood, would fain keep back the wheels of time. Even literary men have been found ready to sound the note of alarm that the progress of female education is likely to prove injurious to the race by deteriorating the physical health and development of the mothers of the future.

There can be no doubt that this is not altogether a superfluous warning, in regard to the conduct of education for both sexes under the present general "cramming system," which pervades all our educational institutions, and has called forth such a vigorous protest from English men of letters. Doubtless, also, the evil effects of the system are likely to tell much more injuriously on young women than on young men, but, this is merely an accident of education, not its necessary or legitimate accompaniment; and we may trust that, ere long, the growing intelligence of the age will sweep away a practice so injurious to the true development, whether mental or physical, which is the aim of education, properly so called.

All true friends of the progress of higher education among women have a double reason for urging on this urgently needed reform.

* A Paper read at the Dominion W. C. T. U., by Agnes Maule Machar.