

FOR THE LAND WE LIVE IN.

Memoirs of P. A. De Gaspé.

The Haberville Manor—Its Old Laird.

"The period through which M. de Gaspé has lived [1786-1871] has been so eventful, and the public occurrences of his earlier years, were so brimful of romantic interest that he could hardly fail to be interesting, while pouring out the budget of his recollections, even to list-eners on this side of the Atlantic."—*London Review*, 29 Oct., 1864.

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ROBABLY, the hold retained by the De Gaspé memoirs on the reading public is mainly due to the valuable and much needed light shed by them on the social aspect of a remote and misty period in Canadian annals. Unquestionably the genial seignior of St. Jean Port-Joly, has invested with enduring charm this record of the stormy days of yore. His facile pen, aided by his marvellous memory and social position, brings one face to face with contemporaries of note—men and women who existed one hundred years ago. We fancy we see them in flesh and blood; we watch them gracefully or sorrowfully moving through the maze of the all-permeating, overpouring drama of the time—some of them unwilling, terrorised witnesses of the appalling scenes, of blood-prescription and anguish organized by Fouquier Tinville and Robespierre. Occasionally, our old friend tries his hand at reproducing on the canvas a brief sketch of some distinguished French *émigrés*: such as that of the devoted French priests, the Abbé de Colonne, brother to the French Minister of State, or the Abbé Desjardins, both glad to escape the guillotine and find life secure under the ægis of British power at Quebec—sueing from a protestant monarch, hesitatingly but successfully, for a boon denied to them in their own favored, but distracted and frenzied country, the right to worship their maker according to their own lights; sometimes one is called on to greet some eminent colonist, glad to exchange the pomp and show of the old world for a Canadian home.

At page 88, M. de Gaspé introduces us as follows to a village celebrity, still well remembered, on the settlements of the Lower Saint Lawrence, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, bent with years, but jauntily sporting the medals and decorations awarded him by the *Petit Caporal*, for Wagram, Jena or Austerlitz.

Let us translate: "I advise, says M. de Gaspé, persons visiting Rivière du Loup, to call on Monsieur Louis, a relic of the French army, decorated with the St. Helena medal, and they will thank me. Our friend Monsieur Louis (he has as many friends as he has acquaintances) is a fine-looking old man, with face ruddy, simple manners, and a ready, taking address, recalling ingeniously, but leaving out the creditable part played in them by himself, the events of which he has been an eye-witness. This Nestor of the French army, through the kindness of a church sexton, a friend of his father, saw Louis XVI. and his family assist at a low mass in a chapel, the name of which I have forgotten. From his father's farm, two leagues out of Paris, he remembers hearing the boom of the great guns at the taking of the Bastille. Every respectable person in France, he says, shuddered at the sight of the horrors committed on French soil. But stupor had seized hold of the population, no one dared raise a voice.

Monsieur Louis made the first Italian campaign under the great Napoleon and laid down his arms only after the disaster of Waterloo. He was then serving under General Grouchy; he does his utmost to exculpate his chief for not appearing in time on that battle field so disastrous to France. "The roads, says Mr. Louis, were so horrible that the Prussians had abandoned their artillery and their heavy baggage and Grouchy was naturally led to believe that Blucher could not have reached the battle field before night."

There is nothing strange, in Canadians of old, retaining before the French revolution of '89, their liking for France; their relations with their French compatriotes had not been much interrupted. Since the conquest, in 1759, several Canadian gentlemen, Messrs. de Salaberry, de Saint Luc, de Lery, de Saint Ours, my two uncles, de La Naudière and others, were in the habit of speaking enthusiastically of France, of the magnificence and glitter of the French Court, of the kind heartedness of the King, of the beauty of the Queen, and of the affability of the whole French Court. M. de Salaberry had seen the Dauphin at the garden of the Tuileries, in the arms of a lady of honor, to witness the ascent of a balloon launched by the Montgolfier Brothers. "This loveable and handsome child," used he to say, "raised his little hands to heaven, to which, after enduring horrible tortures, he was soon to wing his flight," and every one deplored the royal misfortunes and execrated the tormentors—*les boureaux*. M. Louis René Chausigros de Lery belonged to Louis

XIV's body guard; happening to be absent on leave, on the 10th August, 1793, he thus escaped the massacre of that day. On his return to Canada, he was in the habit of singing a touching lament which brought tears to the eyes of all who heard him. Though I was very young at that time and can remember it but imperfectly, I shall recall it and leave it to our poets, should they not like my version, to improve it.

Lady Milnes, the wife of Governor Sir Robt. Shore Milnes, asked M. de Lery to sing this lament at a dinner given at the Château Saint Louis, bursting into tears on listening to the first stanza, she left the table, but returning after ten minutes, she requested M. de Lery to continue:—

"Un troubadour Bearnais, (*)
Les yeux inondés de larmes,
A ses montagnards chantait
Ce refrain, sourd d'alarmes:
Le petit-fils de Henri
Est prisonnier dans Paris!

I a vu couler le sang
De cette garde fidèle
Qui vient d'offrir en mourant
Aux Français un vrai modèle,
En combattant pour Louis,
Le petit fils de Henri.

Ce dauphin, ce fils chéri,
Qui faisait notre espérance!
De pleurs sera donc nourri!
Le berceau qu'on donne en France
Au petit-fils de Henri
Sont les prisons de Paris!

Au pied de ce monument
Où le bon Henri respire
Pourquoi l'airain foudroyant?
On veut donc qu'Henri conspire
Lui-même contre ses fils
Les prisonniers de Paris!

Français! trop ingrats Français!
Rendez Louis et sa campagne:
C'est le bien des Bearnais,
C'est le fils de la montagne;
Le prisonnier de Paris
Est toujours le fils d'Henri.

The *Memoirs* contain a graphic account of the tragic death, in 1811, of one of the uncles of M. de Gaspé, Charles de Lanaudière, who, under General de Lery, had been seriously wounded at the battle of Ste. Foye, on the 28 April 1760,—he was then 16 years old. Charles de Lanaudière, a brave and intelligent French officer, M. de Gaspé regrets to say, was not of a communicative turn of mind, else he might have considerably enlarged the budget of interesting anecdotes which our genial old *raconteur* had to impart. The author of the *Memoirs*, on mentioning the battle of Ste. Foye, chronicles a dainty tid-bit of seige narrative thus: "One day, that my uncle Baby and myself, we were driving past Dumont's mill, (†) he stopped the carriage and said:

"You see this water course running north, well, during the engagement of