



Life, Literature and Education.

[Contributions on all subjects of popular interest are always welcome in this Department.]



Sous le Cap Street, Quebec.

A TRIP TO QUEBEC.

(Continued.)

In the preceding articles of this series I gave you no definite description of Quebec, and for a very good reason, viz., that at the time when they were written I had not been about the grand old city enough to really know it. To-day, sitting once more in the old London office, I have only to close my eyes to see again the hills and battlements, the quaint houses, the glorious vista of mountain and water which, even within the space of one short week, we learned to love so well. "Connais-sous nous mieux, aimons nous plus," freely translated, "Let us know each other better, and love each other more," the first motto which we saw emblazoned on the ramparts as we struggled up Mountain Hill from the wharf, has come to mean something to us now; we have learned to know the fortress city and a few of its people, and we have left both with regret.

To shut one's eyes and see Quebec, is one thing; to describe it so that anyone else can see it, is another. I am afraid my attempt must be but lame, but one can only do the best one can.

I cannot tell you the emotions which stirred my own heart, at least, and I am very sure those of many others, also, in wandering about Quebec. Every foot of ground is historic. You can scarcely go a block without finding, if you will, some relic, some landmark, some tradition. Here happened some incident

of the early Church, there some stirring event of Indian warfare; here were held brilliant social functions of the gay old French regime, there came the crash of cannon balls, as in one siege or another the city of earlier days was laid low; and there, over all, stands the Citadel, a monument of modern strength, crowning the great rock which may well be called Britain's Canadian Gibraltar. Perhaps we were very bumptious Canadians, but we just wanted to shout when we saw the grand old Union Jack floating up there, tossing its folds out on the breeze above the great cliffs, and the mighty river below, where crouched the grim old sea-dogs, Britain's warships, steel gray against the steel-gray water. I don't think I have ever idealized war, or have ever been overcome by military glamor—peace is, after all, so very much nobler—yet the sight of the big fortress, the British flag, and those British Guardians of the sea, made me feel proud indeed of being a British subject—not for the sake of these things themselves, but for that of what they signify.

Possibly the best general view of Quebec is to be had from the King's Bastion of the Citadel. As no one was admitted to the latter during the Prince's stay in the city (his apartments were in the Governor-General's residence, within the walls of the Citadel itself) we could not get in, but, determined to see as much of the place as possible, one of our first walks was up the street "De la Citadelle," thence on up the embankments, and along the glacis overlooking, upon the one hand, the ditches surrounding the Citadel, and, upon the other, the magnificent panorama of city and river, and far-away landscape stretching towards the sea. The ditches looked to me about 30 feet deep, but I am an awful judge of measurement. They are simply roads, dug out from the hill, and flanked by perpendicular walls of solid masonry, the inner of which is closely loop-holed for musketry. Within the inner wall—the grand secret which we could not penetrate—there lies, we were told, an enclosure of forty acres, about which are the quarters for soldiers and officers, the Governor's residence, storehouses for ammunition, stables for cavalry, etc., and in the very center of the square a brass cannon captured by the British at the Battle of Bunker's Hill. There are, of course, many secrets about the Citadel which no one except the military officials may at any time penetrate. People tell of mysterious underground passages running from bastion to bastion, from Martello tower to Martello tower—of many other things—but those who really know tell nothing. . . . The first fortifications, by the way, were built of wood by the French, who spent so much money upon them that Louis XIV. is reported to have asked whether the ramparts at Quebec were built of gold. The second, also of wood, were constructed by the British, but, falling into decay, were replaced in the earlier part of last century by the present massive stone structures, which were put up at a cost of about \$25,000,000 (since added to), according to plans approved by the Duke of Wellington. . . . Immediately to the west of the Citadel lie the

Plains of Abraham—of which, more later.

Failing in our attempt to gain access to the King's Bastion, we did the next best thing, viz., followed the glacis to a point as near as possible to its base. Here, again, words fail me. Look down with me, down, down, hundreds of feet below to the great river, with the quaint houses of Lower Town huddling along its shore, and the fine town of Levis, with its massive forts, straggling up the heights on the opposite side, so near that you can see every detail, for the river here narrows to about a mile in width, hence the name "Quebec," from "ke-bee," an Indian word meaning a strait, or "place where the water narrows." Now look on past the shipping, the warships, the steamers moving about stately—if I may coin the only adverb which seems to suit—the panting tugs, the sail-boats, the graceful steam yachts, the launches skimming about on the surface like water-beetles; see the vast river as it rapidly widens toward the Gulf; in the immediate foreground to the right the Isle of Orleans, originally called the Isle de Bacchus, because of the wild grapes that grew there; to the left, the long village-dotted vista running off to Cape Tourmente and the blue Laurentians; and immediately below, the Beauport Flats, of historic fame, the river St. Charles, more French houses huddled along the shore, the outer ramparts, and the fine buildings of Upper Town, chief of which, of course, is the far-famed Chateau Frontenac, with its equally far-famed Dufferin Terrace.

This hotel is really much larger than I had expected, and will be larger yet, for an immense addition is now under construction. It is owned and operated by the C. P. R., and was erected at a cost of \$1,500,000, on the site of the old Chateau St. Louis, first built by Champlain, then added to and made the viceregal residence of the old-time French Governors of Canada. It was from this earlier chateau that the haughty Frontenac sent to Sir William Phipps, who had demanded the surrender of the city, the famous reply that he would "answer him from the mouths of his cannon." The modern chateau is built of red brick, and is palatially furnished. We were in it upon a day when the great ladies staying there were setting out for a garden party at which the Prince was to be present. Magnificent women, the most of them were, with plumage fine enough to make the homeliest almost beautiful. Indeed, I never saw such "style" in my life before—such plumes and jewels, such billows of lace and silk and satin, such masterpieces of the dressmaker's art. A great many of the women wore the new "coatees" which are establishing themselves so rapidly. Most of these were made of heavy lace or open braid-work, but further down the river, at the resorts, we saw outing coats of the same pattern but made of cretonne. Verily, what next? . . . Before leaving the Chateau, it may be interesting to note that some of the cellars of the old Chateau St. Louis may still be seen under a portion of Dufferin Terrace.

Dufferin Terrace, which runs along the top of the precipice immediately in front of the Chateau, is one of the

greatest promenades in the world. As improved, according to the order of the Earl of Dufferin, during his regime in Canada (the beginning of it was constructed in 1838), it is 1,500 feet in length, but is being greatly extended at the present time. It is about 60 feet in width (these figures are official), and is plentifully provided with seats and kiosks, from which one can look down on the river 200 feet below, upon the wharves, and the curious streets, "Champlain," and "Little Champlain," at the very base of the cliff. These streets, by the way, are very narrow and dirty, but very quaint. A little further to the westward is the famous "Sous le Cap." Trixy and I got into it—of course, we had to go through Sous le Cap—but, as Trixy said, we got out of it, "scared stiff." There is no bolting off Sous le Cap if you get tired of it—it simply winds on and on, its tumble-down houses so close on either hand that you can almost touch those at opposite sides at once—without a single cross-street throughout its length. . . . The dirt of it, notwithstanding the "washings" that invariably hang right across it! The dirty-faced children of it!!! And the smells of it!!!! Ugh!!!!

We met two evil-looking men in the Sous le Cap. They said nothing to us, but immediately we set off, almost at a run, for there wasn't one respectable-looking soul in sight. We did not get away so easily, however, from the children. First half a dozen of them, apparently little Jews, started after us with outstretched hands, shouting something that sounded like "Bon! Bon!" Whether this was intended for French "Bon," "gift," or not, we did not know, but we tried handing out a few coppers, and found the interpretation correct. Immediately the foolishness of such a yielding became apparent. Children flew out from every hand like hornets, and the promise was so good that we should have fifty of them, at least, at our heels that we were compelled to give a very peremptory refusal. Moral: throw out coppers in Sous le Cap—if you are in a calèche.

But, dear me, I started off to tell about the principal buildings of Quebec, and here I am at Sous le Cap. Never mind, we can just keep on in its vicinity, Lower Town though it be.

At no great distance, and quite near the queer French market by the river, stands a very interesting old church, that of Notre Dame des Victoires. This church is neither beautiful or magnificent, there are much finer in Quebec, but in historic interest it lacks nothing. It was erected by the French, as may be read on its facade, in 1688, and later improved and dedicated to Heaven as a memorial of gratitude for the repulse of Sir William Phipps, in 1690, and the preservation of the city from the attack by Sir Hovenden Walker's armada, which was almost totally wrecked in the Gulf, in 1711. During Wolfe's siege, in 1759, it was partially destroyed by the bombardment from the Levis shore, but was renovated soon afterwards. This church contains the usual statuary, one of which is a most realistic figure of the dead Christ in a glass case; but the Stations of the Cross are in relief, instead of being painted, as