

development and mental culture they are, too. Recently the parliament of Quebec passed a law granting a lot of land of one hundred acres to all parents who have twelve or more living children, and already over one thousand applications have been made for the provincial bounty. Formerly children were made to take their meals at a small table at one end of the room, generally sitting on one of the logs kept near the stove, until they had made their first communion. It appears that the logs were used for mincing meat as well, with the other end turned up. In their little quarrels the older children used to taunt the younger, saying: "Oh, you still eat off the block!" and much humiliation was felt.* *Apropos* of large families, there is a story which deserves mention. A peasant, whose means were not in proportion to his wit, perpetrated a joke on his priest, the outcome of which must have been gratifying to one in his straitened circumstances. He called one day upon his pastor, bringing with him his twenty-sixth child, born to him that morning. "*Monsieur le curé*," he said, "by the laws of my country and church it is my bounden duty to hand over to you the twenty-sixth portion of all the natural products which God in his goodness may send me. I consider children are included in that category, and I therefore leave with you this afternoon my twenty-sixth child, just presented to me by my good wife." The *curé* appreciated the pleasantry, although poor himself, for the parish was in the back concessions of land, newly cleared, and the tithes—formerly the tenth portion, now the twenty-sixth—were consequently small; but he smilingly replied: "I accept my share of what Providence has bestowed upon you in its wise dispensation. But do not keep the child from his mother. Take him home and board him at my expense, and later on I shall pay for his schooling."

The garb of the peasantry exhibits the extreme of plainness. The coarsest homespun, worked up without dye or polish, the materials as dull in color as they are rough in texture, forms the staple of the suit, the monotonous brown or gray of which sadly needs the contrast afforded by the colored sash (*ceinture fichée*) about the waist, and the blue or scarlet of the nodding *toque*. They wear beef moccasins stretching near to the knee in summer, and cloth shoes and leggings (*mitasses*) in winter. The moccasins are all made round about the toes, and for this reason old country people sometimes call the French Canadians *round toes*. The wife's (*la bonne femme*) dress is of the simplest description, composed of a warm woolen shawl, a blue skirt or dress of homespun, and a neat linen cap, frilled and tied under the chin. For church-going and holiday occasions,

* *Mémoires Philippe Aubert de Gaspé.*