

THE SISTERS OF ST. ANN.

THEIR CONVENT AT LACHINE.

A Magnificent Exhibit Prepared from the Works of the Pupils for the Chicago World's Fair.

On Monday afternoon we had the pleasure of a run out to Lachine where we spent a few hours in the enjoyable task of examining the exhibit which the good Sisters of St. Ann have collected for the purpose of sending, as their contribution, to the Canadian Catholic Educational display at the World's Fair. Before entering upon the immediate subject of this article we have a word or two to say about the institution at Lachine and the order of religious under whose care it flourishes.

Numerous are the orders of nuns scattered through the Dominion, some more than others, some from one country, some from another, but all belonging to that great body of Christian enlightenment, the Catholic Church. However, few of these religious societies are Canadian in origin, of these few the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann is one and perhaps the most pronouncedly so. As you stand at the front door of the magnificent structure that with its cupolas and spires, and grey battlements and walls, looks upon the sweeping of the grant St. Lawrence that rushes in headlong speed over the rugged rocks of the far famed Lachine rapids, your eye takes in a panorama unsurpassed in natural attractions, unequalled, perhaps in artistic grandeur. Behind you the village and, within a few moments walk, the railway depot from which you have almost hourly connection with Montreal; before you the superb scenery of one of Canada's most romantic spots; around you the fresh and health-imparting air that rushes down with the great flood of the most glorious river on our Continent. But apart from the enchantments which Nature, with lavish hand, has flung about the place, every step of ground you walk upon is sacred in the historical recollections that hover about it, and every nook and corner is haunted by the spirits of by-gone heroes, martyrs for the faith, pioneer priests, world-braving navigators, fearless explorers, men of courage, women of devotion, children of the early days, soldiers in the ranks of the Church Militant; and above their ashes, high over the scenes of trials and triumphs, towers sublimely, into the blue of a Canadian sky, the cross crowned dome of that two fold institution—the Mother House of the Sisters of St. Ann and their convent school—a worthy monument to immortalize and forever commemorate the mighty deeds done upon the banks of our noble river for Faith and Country.

It was the ever-to-be remembered, and forever dearly beloved Mgr. Bourget who founded the Order of the Sisters of St. Ann. In his wisdom he beheld and understood the requirements of his rapidly increasing diocese, and he knew that there was room and work for an order such as the one he contemplated. His desires were soon fulfilled, for in the person of Miss Durocher, of Vaudreuil an energetic and devoted founderess of such a community was discovered, and she co-operating, with all her heart, in the work of the venerable prelate, and placing her confidence in the all-ruling Providence that guides the destinies of our young country, deposited her life at the feet of the protectress of our Province—the good St. Ann—and assuming an humble, a rigidly simple garb, went forth upon her mission to beneficence. Only a year ago did that noble lady leave the scene of this world's struggle, and in her eighty third year, under the icy clutch of la grippe, she departed, leaving behind her a community fully established, with twenty branches in this Province, twenty-four in the United States, ten in British Columbia, and three in far off frozen Alaska. Yes, up there, in the region of the northern sea; off beneath the prismatic fringes of the Aurora Borealis, in the foot-steps of the pioneer Jesuits, the Sisters of St. Ann have gone to set up their abodes. In the land of the seal and the walrus, where ice-burys chill the air and the furred savage ekes out his dreary life, these nuns have carried the torch of education, lit at the flaming furnace of Catholic faith, and with its flickerings they illumine the darkness that the

clouds of ignorant have flung upon that distant region.

But we wander from our subject. It is the Convent at Lachine that is the object of our article, and the exhibit prepared for the World's Fair that has caused us to take up our pen. As in all the other cases of our homes of Catholic education it is somewhat difficult to know how or where to commence. Yet the Sisters of St. Ann have certainly one of the most easily understood systems that we have yet met with, and so exact and complete is their collection that it reduces a report almost to a mere enumeration.

With the exception of samples in calligraphy and map drawing from other branches of the order, all the exhibits are the production of some of the two hundred and seventeen pupils in the institution at Lachine. On each copy that is presented are to be found the different percentages gained by the pupil who did the work. A standard of ten per cent has been laid down, so that it is easy to calculate the progress made and the notes gained by each one. On opening each of the copy-books we find the programme of the class. Thus the whole course can be followed from the preparatory, through the six years of study, ending with the two years of superior or graduating classes—making in all eight years of study apart from the preparatory. In the preparatory class there are three copy-books on each subject in the curriculum; in all the other classes there are six copy-books on each subject.

We may as well at once remark that all we speak of in the way of exhibits are duplicated, being in French and in English. For the sake of brevity we will follow the English course alone, yet remarking that it corresponds exactly with the French course, both of which are equally represented. In the books of the preparatory and sixth classes the corrections made by the teachers are indicated, and in all the others the corrections are made in red ink upon the margin. All this work consists of the daily exercises done by the children during their ordinary study hours. One young lady whose copy book was somewhat illuminated with red ink corrections remarked to her teacher that she was proud of her faults, because her pages looked more attractive and would likely be never noticed if it were not for the corrections. This is evidently a philosophical way of looking at the subject; yet we must remember that the great Sir Walter Scott, who has immortalized his own land and added wonderment to the glory of English literature, never presented a composition to his teacher that was not cut up with hieroglyphics of corrections. However, these corrections give a clear idea of the progress made by the pupils from one class to another. In the back of the copies of the elementary classes are several illustrations of what the pupils can do in the way of linear drawing.

In glancing over the whole exhibit we find three courses apart from the primary one: 1st, the Elementary, for children of six to ten years; 2nd, the Intermediate, for girls of ten to fifteen years; 3rd, the Superior, for young ladies of fifteen to eighteen or upwards. We need not follow the details of the whole system; suffice to say that it is one peculiar to the Sisters of St. Ann, and that it is as complete as the pupil can desire to have it. Passing to the sewing and other domestic work, fancy or plain, we must say that the style in which the samples are arranged is by far the best and most satisfactory that we have yet seen. One immense book contains all these samples. They are about six or eight inches each way in size and consequently occupy very little space, while giving a perfect idea of what the pupils can do. In opening this book we meet with plain stitches by the little ones; then these plain stitches applied in the making of miniature samples of underwear; then more difficult sketches and the application of them. By degrees we reach the knitting; the simplest and most elementary, at first, followed by a gradation of more difficult attempts. After these come the darning, patching, mending; all of which are as near perfection as any ordinary man could wish to have his wife accomplish. As we approach the superior course we meet with the crocheting, cutting of patterns, fashions, embroidery, lace work and illustrations of how a tear in broad-cloth can be mended with hair. Here we find also a spread—or bed cover—done in the

finest of knitting with almost spider-web threads—and surrounded with Roman embroidery. There are fantastic samples of crazy work, some very good pieces of tatting, and last and most difficult of all, raised embroidery of the most exquisite design and finish.

If we linger too long with all these attractions we shall find our space run out before we reach some of the most interesting exhibits. In the superior course a class of botany has its collection and an admirable one it is. It would delight a professor of that beautiful study to turn over those pages and examine the different specimens of our Canadian Flora, carefully pressed and accompanied with the pupil's explanations and classifications into families and species. But from that delightful task we must hurry on to a very important branch, namely that of book-keeping (single and double entry.) Here we have the complete set of books kept by each pupil—some in French, others in English—and consisting of day-book, index, ledger, and cash-book. This exhibit needs no comment as all our readers know what a complete course of book-keeping means.

We are now confronted with the drawing classes. We find the samples set forth somewhat after the manner of the sewing, in large copy-books. We notice the gradation from simple lines, on to the highest point in linear drawing: this is followed by perspective and shading; then comes the application of these rudiments in leaves, fruit, flowers and vegetable life; next is animal life, birds, fishes and rough sketches of beasts; finally, human forms, hands, feet, ears and eyes; at last as a climax, the human features and expressions. The paintings, in watercolors or oil, follow the same gradation. There are a couple of very beautiful oil landscapes that will surely attract attention.

Before closing these most interesting and instructive copy-books, we desire to remark that the reverend chaplain has a fine collection of work done by the pupils in the class of religious instruction. This, we trust, will be forwarded with the other exhibits. Each time that an instruction is given on any subject—such as a commandment or a precept of the Church—the pupils are obliged to write a condensed review of the sermon, and these reviews are collected and form a most attractive feature in the display.

We have dwelt to some extent upon this subject and yet columns would be required to do even simple justice to the work that the pupils of the Lachine Convent have furnished. While reflecting credit upon our Catholic educational system, and upon our whole country, it is an honor to the good sisters of that admirable community, and shows clearly that where energy and devotion exist, and the hand of Providence guides, mighty things may be accomplished. Humble was the beginning when Mgr. Bourget accepted the sacrifice of the Vaudreuil girl: magnificent the consummation of the work she undertook, and its fruits will ripen into seeds of greater glory for the Church and the country. Looking back at the convent of Lachine, as the train rushes off towards Montreal, and glancing, with the mind's eye, upon the history of that community, one feels like repeating the lines of that canticle sung by the Jewish Maiden of old: "*et exalabit humiles.*"

THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

Received by the Holy Father.

On Sunday, Jan. 25, the Holy Father admitted to audience Brother Joseph, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, with twenty-five of his confreres. His Holiness received the Brothers in his private study and after Brother Joseph had made an appropriate address in the name of the Brothers, His Holiness in a conversational tone, that was at that same time dignified, amiable and graceful, spoke in substance as follows:

"We greatly appreciate the affectionate sentiments that you have expressed. Yesterday, when going to pray before the relics of the newly beatified Bianchi, we passed in review all the Blessed whom we had raised upon the altar during our recent Jubilee festivals. But among them all, the one that was uppermost in our mind, was your illustrious Founder, who was so zealous for the Christian education of youth, at first in France, and latter on, through France in other lands. Both Jean Baptiste de la Salle and Vin-

cent de Paul, during the two last centuries, created works that were truly regenerators of society. And as regards your founder, we entertain the hope of being able to canonize him. Yes we ourselves desire to be the one who shall inscribe his name upon the album of the saints. You tell us that you consider yourselves as among the least of religious institutes. We, on the contrary, consider you as great, for in dedicating yourselves to the education of youth, you raise yourselves up to the rank of valiant captains in the militia of the Church. In the past, the Sovereign Pontiffs have always shown by precious favors the esteem with which they honored your Congregation. Be pleased to know that our heart feels toward you the same sentiments.

"You said, and rightly said, that an open warfare is waged against the Church and the good works of the Church, and if she has had always to fight, never did so many enemies seem to conspire against her in so many ways, as at the present day. No one, more than the Pope, is in daily warfare with the powerful enemies. But it is as true to-day as it has been during the past eighteen centuries, that the Church and the Papacy have nothing to fear, for the gates of hell shall never prevail. In the very fact of this warfare is there an additional motive for the religious to be more valiant, and possess a virtue that is more heroic. You need the spirit of your Blessed Founder in these troublesome times. God was pleased to bestow upon John Baptist de la Salle, for the wants of his day and generation, a powerful virtue that reacted victoriously upon youth; it is through the same virtue and the same spirit of your Blessed Founder, that you also can accomplish the holy work that has been confided to you. We recently said to the Superior of a religious order that certain fervent religious are obedient to a holy inspiration, in offering themselves as victims for the wants of Holy Church.

"You tell me that your Institute numbers nearly 18,000 Brothers and gives a Christian education to over 300,000 pupils. Our Lord has bidden little children to come unto Him, for being innocent their prayers are welcome at God's throne. Be yours also the task of letting little children come unto you, and of striving to plant Christian Doctrine in their hearts. Inspire them especially with a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin; teach them to allow themselves to be led, as by the hand, by this good mother, until they arrive safe and sound at the threshold of eternity.

"Your order, as well as our seminaries, has had to deplore the painful separation of religious, who were obliged to quit their community and its safeguards for the barracks and its perils. Oh! make known to them that we bless them and that we shall unceasingly beseech God to sustain them. We bless also with our whole heart all the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the benefactors of your establishments, who support Christian education by their influence and generosity, and all the young men of your associations, so numerous and so prosperous. But our heart would extend this Apostolical Benediction beyond your congregation and the thousands that it instructs. We would have it shared by every nation in which your zeal is exercised especially by France, that land of generosity and devotedness, which gave birth to your founder and your congregation.

"You are pleased to come to us with presents like the Magi of old. Providence has permitted that since the spoliation of the domains that had been justly given to the Roman Pontiffs for the liberty and dignity of their office, loving sons have come to the aid of their oppressed Father. And in consequence the Pope has never, during twenty two years, been under the necessity of extending a hand to his spoliators. May your generosity be blessed and rewarded a hundredfold." The discourse being ended the Sovereign Pontiff admitted each Brother to special audience, addressing him some words of comfort, and with paternal goodness granting him all the spiritual favors asked.—*From the Univers, Paris.*

A Chance Visited.—She: It's no use Mr. De Tone: in my present state of mind, I would not accept the best man living. He very coolly: No, I see you won't; but, at any rate, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that he has offered himself.—Pick-Me-Up.