

PICTURESQUE CANADA.

PART III.

The opening sentence of the third part of this work is, we venture to consider, somewhat too characteristic of the country:—"A suspension bridge, built across the top of the Montmorency Fall, had been too slightly constructed, and had not stood very long before it broke asunder while a *habitant* and his wife were crossing it in their market cart. They were swept at once over the cataract, never to be seen again." We may safely assume that the person or persons who constructed the bridge on the verge of a precipice 250 feet high, in such a fashion that a *habitant's* market cart proved to be too severe a test for its strength, were not disturbed by any enquiry, or if they were, the catastrophe would probably be attributed to the ponderous nature of the market cart. It is well for Jumbo that he did not precede the market cart.

With regard to the literary character of this third part, although it is not characterized by the gross blunders and absurdities of the former two, we do not reach its sixth line before we are confronted with crudity of composition, and we soon read that the "cone" of ice and snow at the foot of the Falls of Montmorency, is said to "grow;" we had not previously heard of growing ice; neither had it been our privilege to hear of a "foliage-embowered road;" nor of the "situation of a seminary" rendering it "less vulnerable than many other districts to outside influences." There is one good sentence in this part, and we are glad to notice it—"The French-Canadians have always fought for a faith and an idea, hence they have remained French." Another sentence in the wake of this, may also deserve to be transferred—"The thirteen colonies, which fought for material interests, are American, not English."

We are tempted to take some further extracts, on the score of their interest—"The north shore of the St. Lawrence is more French than the south, where the proximity of the United States, and the influence of the English settled townships are sensible (which we will translate perceptible). From Montreal downwards the towns of course excepted you are to all intents in a land where English is not spoken. Below Quebec, far down to the Labrador coast, is the most purely French portion of all. You may find greater simplicity of life, and more of the old customs in such a primitive parish as Isle Aux Coudres, further down the river, the people on the coast where the St. Lawrence becomes the Gulf, are sailors and fishermen rather than farmers; they along the Ottawa are lumberers and raftsmen; but the Cote de Beaufort is fairly typical of the whole of French Canada.

We observe that there is so much resemblance between the practice of the Roman Catholic population of Lower Canada and the good people of St. James', Toronto, that they each have their burial plots for "unbaptized infants." Among the passages of interest which occur in this third part of the work, we select the following—"In the district of Quebec, you may often hear a *habitant* speak of going "*au fort*" (to the fort), meaning thereby "*au village*" (to the village)." Then we have the following touch of nature--In the old days, when *seigneur* and *cure* both derived their income from imposts on produce, the degree of consideration in which a *habitant* was held by his superiors, and consequently his respectability, was settled principally by the amount of wheat he sowed."

The writer of this part of the work favors us with some sufficiently crude metaphors, among which we read that "the hill here advances abruptly towards the river;" it would give us

great pleasure to see this abruptly advancing hill. The titles of the *seigneurs* also, we read, "had nearly quite disappeared" before the conquest of the country. Waving such awkwardnesses as these however, we will take an extract or two which merit transfer:—"One of the most interesting aspects of the feudal tenure was the social relation between *seigneur* and *consitaire* (landlord and tenant). This was nearly always a paternal one, so much so, indeed, that it was quite as much a duty as a right by courtesy of the *seigneur* to stand god-father for the eldest children of his *consitaires*. M. De Gaspe gives an amusing account of a friend receiving a New Year's visit from a hundred godsons. The whole system of colonization originally rested on two (classes of) men, the *seigneur* and the *cure*. Through them the Government worked its military and religious organizations, while their interest in the soil, from which both derived their income, were identical."

Of the French system, the Abbe Casgrain remarks:—"The democratic and secularizing spirit of our age is opposed to these feudal and ecclesiastical institutions, but we may be permitted to doubt whether it could have invented a system better adapted to the genius of our race, and to the needs of the situation."

Among the glimpses of Lower Canadian life, we obtain from this part, are the following:—"In the summer, wizened old *confreres* (old people), too bent and worn out for any other work, salute you from the tops of the piles of stones they lazily hammer between the complacent puffs of their pipes, and their comments on passers-by. In winter, you have to turn out to let the snow-plough with its great wings, and its long team of six or eight horses go past, amid cheery shouts from its guides, whose rosy faces and icicled cheeks topping the clouds of snow that cover their blanket coats, make them look like so many Father Christmases." "If you stop to drink of the springs from the hillside, the odds are greatly in favor of some of the host of brown-skinned, black-eyed, merry looking children that play about the neighboring house being sent over to ask 'if Monsieur will not by preference have some milk?' You like the clear ice-cold water. "*Bien, c'est bonne l'eau frette quand on a soif*" (Well, cold water is good, when one's thirsty), but Monsieur will come in perhaps, and rest, for "*sacre il fait chaud cet apres-midi*" (d—n it, its warm this afternoon). Monsieur, however, goes on amid all sorts of good wishes and polite farewells. One of the most striking sights by the roadside of a night towards the end of autumn are the family groups 'breaking' flax. After the stalks have been steeped, they are dried over fires built in pits on the hillsides, then stripped of the outer bark by a rude home-made machine constructed entirely of wood. Oxen do much of the heavier hauling, their pace being quite fast enough for the easy patient temperament of the *habitant*. A characteristic mode of measuring distance is by the number of pipes to be smoked in traversing it. Every now and then a roadside cross is passed, sometimes a grand *Calvaire*, resplendent with stone and gilding, covered by a roof, and from its high platform showing afar the symbol of Christian faith; as a general rule, a simple wooden cross enclosed by a paling reminds the good Catholic of his faith, and is saluted by a reverent lifting of his hat, and a pause in his talk as he goes by. Sometimes you meet with little chapels like those at Chateau Richer. They stand open always, and the country people, as they pass, drop in to say a prayer to speed good souls' deliverance and their own journey. Robberies are almost unknown, and in many districts locks are never used. Even very poor cottages have masses of brilliant flowers in the windows, and little garden plots in front, neatly kept and assiduously cultivated, for the altar of the parish church is decorated with them."