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LIFE  
OF  
MADAME DE LA PELTRIE

(Magdalen de Chauvigny),

FOUNDRESS OF THE URSULINE CONVENT, QUEBEC.

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE PUPILS AND INSCRIBED  
TO THEM

BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY.



EDWARD DUNIGAN & BROTHER,  
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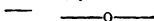
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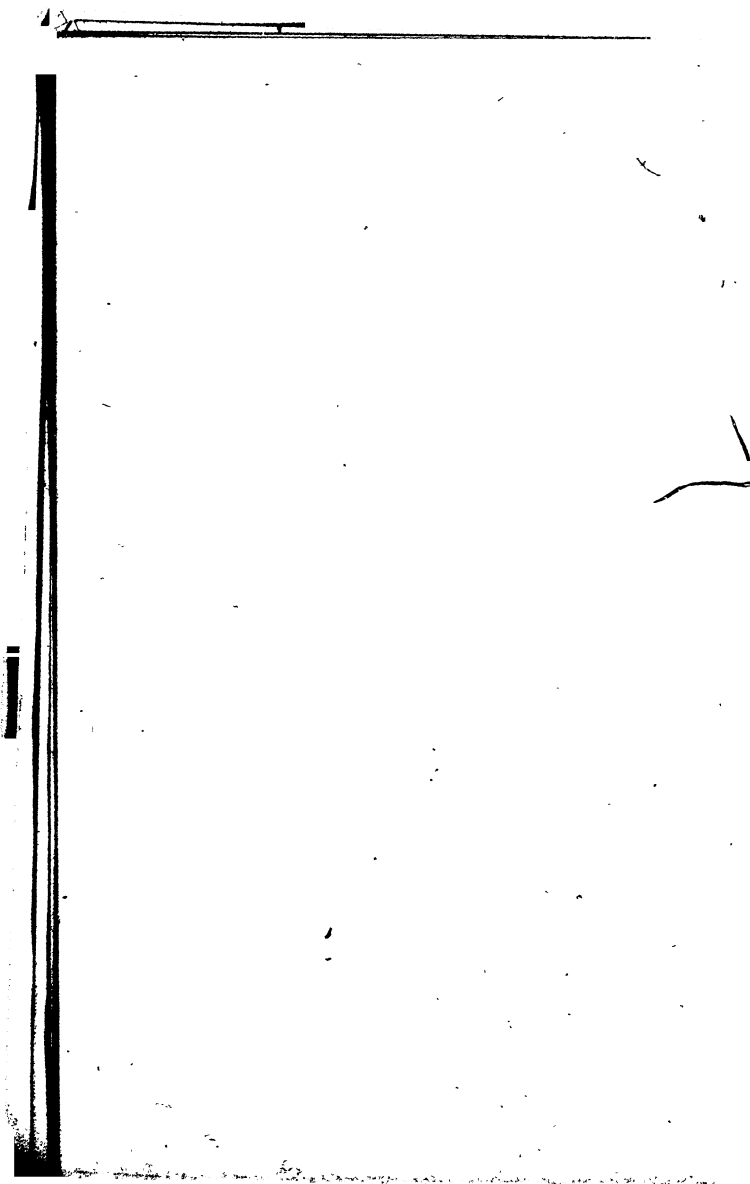
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## ADDRESS TO OUR YOUNG READERS.



As more than two centuries have elapsed since the interesting events occurred which we now lay before our Youthful Readers, it seems proper that we should at once introduce to them the various persons whose names are identified with these historic facts and scenes of by-gone days.

It was on the 4th of May, 1639, that a young and noble lady was seen ready to embark on board the Admiral's vessel, St. Joseph, about to sail from the port of Dieppe. On one side of her are two groups of ladies deeply veiled; on the other, stands a dignified nobleman whose thoughtful air and beaming features reveal the interest he takes in her welfare; before her stand several clergymen whose modest uniform warns us that they are the sons of St. Ignatius; at a little distance is seen one maid, all that remains of her household.

As they stand there together exchanging their last looks and words with their friends, you would scarce imagine that they are leaving their own dear France for ever, but it is even so. That lady is a young widow, the heiress of a noble name, who is going, with her whole fortune, to assist in diffusing the Catholic Faith among the savages of America! . . . Young girls of Canada, do you not recognise the heroine and her companion? Ah! our

Indian mountaineers know them by tradition, and at this day acknowledge that, "The Great Spirit never smiled more graciously on their dark race, than when he sent to these shores the tall white virgins from beyond the seas!" . . . . But whither are they going? To the far western shores of the great St. Lawrence? Yes, to the shores of our own St. Lawrence; not indeed smiling, as we now behold them from the gay steamer as we sail along, admiring the surpassing beauty of mountain, wood, and water-fall, enlivened by golden harvests, and crowned with cottage, hamlet, and village spire! At that remote period these shores were yet covered with their tall original forest trees, whose dark deep foliage oft concealed the lurking savage foe, maturing his deathly designs of invasion and massacre, while here and there, the smoke of a solitary wigwam announced the presence of the primitive proprietors of the soil. . . . .

The adieus are over, the vessel sets sail—her path lies across the trackless waters of the western deep, and, as the sunny plains of France recede from their view, all eyes turn in anxious expectation towards the little fort of Quebec! . . . . Let us follow them across the stormy sea, let us keep in sight this illustrious widow and her pious companions; ever the same in tempest and in calm, their prayers ascend to Heaven calling down blessings on all around them, and ere we witness their reception in Quebec, let us improve our leisure moments, while with the help of our ancient manuscripts and home-tradition, we pass in review the most remarkable events which illustrate the life of this distinguished and virtuous lady.



## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF MADAME DE LA PELTRIE.

MISS MAGDALEN DE CHAUVIGNY was born at Alençon, in France, in the year 1603; her father, Mr. de Chauvigny, Lord of Vaubegon, was greatly distinguished among the nobility of the Province, and her mother was of equally illustrious origin: both parents being penetrated with the love and fear of God, united their efforts to inspire their beloved daughter, with feelings similar to their own. The young Magdalen did not disappoint their hopes; as she grew up, her exterior graces expanded each day to the admiration of her friends, but the fond parents rejoiced still more when they

perceived that her pure soul was under the immediate influence of Heaven, and that her gentle inclinations led her, as if by attraction, to the practice of every virtue. Her purity of heart was remarkable; in her childhood, she not only avoided those actions which in themselves are evil, but likewise, all that could prove inducive to sin, such as self-indulgence, idle diversions, loss of time, etc. The Holy Ghost gave her such a particular zeal for the service of the church that, on Sundays and festivals, all her leisure was spent there. On other days, her spare hours were devoted to the poor who lived on her father's estate; she treated them, not as beings inferior to herself, but as familiar friends, whom circumstances of birth and fortune had less favored. She visited the sick, consoled the afflicted, and esteemed no kind of suffering beneath her notice.

Such were the pursuits and pastimes of Miss de Chauvigny during the smiling years of her adolescence, when the world first laid before her youthful eyes the fascinating view of its deceitful pleasures; but she was not deluded by the enchanting scene; its fleeting joys did not make her forget the eternal interests of her soul. Hence she had a sovereign dislike for the extravagance of fashion and dress, and would have refused all attention to them, had not her parents obliged her to conform herself to the usages established for ladies of her rank; yet even then she was so forgetful of her personal appearance, so preoccupied with the wants of her favorite poor, that she was often seen trying to conceal a basket of provisions within the ample folds of her embroidered skirts, while stealing out of her father's house to relieve the wants of her beloved protégés.

Miss de Chauvigny received her education under the watchful eye of her mother, and she made rapid progress in the studies and accomplishments which the custom of the times assigned to ladies. By fragments of her correspondence we see that she was a well-informed person. Endowed with wisdom beyond her years, she sought to please God in all things, and carefully avoided all that could draw upon her the admiration of the world. Virtues so solid, in a lady of Miss de Chauvigny's rank, rendered it obvious to her friends that the Almighty had some particular design over her; while she herself felt such a powerful attraction towards the religious life that she did not even try to conceal it. Her devoted parents, who had fostered in her every other pious inclination, were, however, averse to this, as they plainly foresaw that if they did not

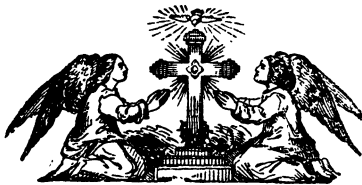
oppose her, she would soon desert them to embrace the seclusion of a cloistered life. They therefore determined to distract her mind from these pious desires, and seized the earliest opportunity of making known to her their real intentions. One evening, after a brilliant *soirée*, given in honor of her seventeenth birthday, they exhausted the most insinuating tenderness, trying to persuade her that more good might be done by a virtuous lady in the gayest circles of society, than by a nun excluded from public view in the deep shade of a cloister. This argument was the most plausible they could urge upon their virtuous daughter; and as soon as she took leave of her parents that evening, she made it the subject of a long and serious meditation. Prostrate in the presence of her crucifix, she wept aloud, and thus addressed herself to

Heaven in the anguish of her heart: "Oh, my God! can it be possible that I am doomed to work out my salvation in the midst of so many dangers! My father now wishes me to attend the opera, the chase, and the masquerade, and, during the hours I shall spend there, I must forget thee, O my good God, who didst think of me from all eternity! No, I cannot forsake thy presence to enjoy that of man, I cannot attend these masquerades during the carnival, I cannot appear at the chase and the opera during Lent, and above all, I cannot endure these visits which papa wishes me to receive!" . . . Then, after some moments of deep reflection, she exclaimed, "Yes, I will go to the Abbey, and beg of them to admit me for a few days, to perform the spiritual exercises at the beginning of Lent; once I am within the gates, I will try to stay there!",



Greatly consoled by this sudden decision of mind, Miss de Chauvigny retired to rest with a light heart.

The next morning at sunrise, Miss de Chauvigny was on her way to the Abbey, where, after obtaining immediate admittance, she wrote home, requesting her parents' leave to stay there a few days.





## CHAPTER II.

MISS DE CHAUVIGNY IS FORCED BY HER PARENTS TO LEAVE  
THE ABBEY AND EMBRACE THE MARRIED STATE—VIRTUES  
WHICH SHE PRACTISES DURING THIS PERIOD OF HER LIFE  
—DEATH OF MR. DE LA PELTRIE, HER HUSBAND.

WE have seen Miss de Chauvigny practise every virtue from her early childhood under the smiling approbation of her parents, who loved her so tenderly that they could not bear to lose sight of her even for one day. We have seen her, in a transport of fervor, desert their noble mansion to seclude herself from the admiration and the love of men, and we shall now again behold her patient and submissive, when forced by her weeping mother and disconsolate father to leave the convent of

her choice, and embrace a state of life altogether opposed to her inclinations.

As soon as the carriage returned home, and the servants announced that Magdalen was going to stay in the Abbey for a few days, nothing could equal the excitement caused by this unpleasant news. The father's surprise and displeasure, the mother's anguish and sorrow, the sister's regret and disappointment, the tears of the whole household, marked that day as one of deep mourning. But her father was, of all, the least resigned to lose her. She was his favorite, and he had already determined that, as long as he lived, his dear Magdalen should not dwell two days in a convent. He immediately ordered the carriage, sent invitations to his friends to meet him at home that evening, drove off without delay, and in less than an hour was standing

before the Abbey gate. The Abbess, who was a distant relative of his, did not appear in the least surprised by this sudden apparition; she told him that his dear Magdalen had entered only to perform the spiritual exercises, in consequence of some private vow. This observation greatly irritated him, and he exclaimed, "My daughter will neither make nor accomplish any vow here as long as I live!" then, raising his voice, he cried aloud, "Give me my child!" At that moment Miss de Chauvigny entered the parlor and threw herself at her father's feet, begging of him to forgive the step she had taken. The fond parents were deeply affected, and while the tender mother wept in silence, the father spoke to his beloved child in the most touching manner: "What have we done to you, my daughter, that you should thus forsake

us? Can you not stay with your parents, at least until you have closed their eyes? After our death you may come to the Abbey if you choose!"

Then seizing her with a strong arm he hurried out of the room, followed by the mother; the servants were watching his movements, the doors flew open before him, in an instant they were all seated in the carriage, and the abbey was out of sight before Miss de Chauvigny had time to say a word in her own defence. On arriving at home, Mr. de Chauvigny found a large circle of friends assembled, to congratulate him upon this achievement of his paternal affection, and the evening was spent in mirth and festivity; only one person present retired to rest that night with a heavy heart, this was Miss de Chauvigny, who had been told by her father that she should attend

a hunting party the next morning, and she thereby understood, better than ever, her father's designs over her.

On returning from the chase the next day, he said to her, "Magdalen, did you notice the young gentleman who rode so gracefully in advance of our party?" And, without waiting for a reply, he added, "That brave knight is my favorite, and I trust that he will soon be yours also!" This choice had long since been made by the devoted parents; and thus Miss de Chauvigny became aware that their frequent visitor, the Chevalier Charles de Grivel de la Peltrie, was the person on whom it had been fixed. In vain she remonstrated with her parents, and shed torrents of tears, in vain she alleged her youth and inexperience, being then only seventeen; they were inexorable, and a little delay was all the favor she

could obtain. In this state of anguish she had recourse to prayer, offering to our divine Lord all the good desires she had ever formed of loving him alone; this purity of intention was very pleasing to God, and He gave her an interior assurance that she would one day be His wholly and entirely.

Thus comforted, she yielded to her father's wish, her marriage with the distinguished nobleman already mentioned was accordingly celebrated, and great was the joy in her father's house during the nuptial festivities. Placed at the head of a family, we shall now see Mme. de la Peltrie leading a life of uniform devotedness to the duties of her state. Without forsaking any of her accustomed exercises of piety, this truly Christian woman gave her husband every mark of the most tender and respectful affection. One child

blessed their union, and as it pleased God to withdraw it from her shortly after its birth, she conformed entirely to her husband's will in regard to pastimes and diversions. With him she was seen in the gayest circles, yielding at all times to his wishes, and he was often heard to say that he had nothing to desire on earth but a long life, to enjoy the happiness of which she was the ministering angel. But such was not, however, the will of Heaven. About five years after his marriage, Mr. de la Peltrie was attacked with a mortal disease, and, though his devoted wife neglected no effort to relieve and restore him, he was, after a very short illness, withdrawn from her care and tenderness. Thus our young heroine was left at the early age of twenty-two, to mourn the loss of a generous and good man, who had never given her the



slightest cause of grief; and, as she shed her last tears over his lifeless remains, she vowed herself anew to her Divine Lord and Master, promising to devote to Him alone each day of her future life. An extract from the letters of our Ven. Mother de P'Incarnation, will fully explain to our young readers, the manner in which she accomplished this vow :

“I will, therefore, tell you how this lady, after the death of her husband, embraced the practice of virtue in a very special manner. She left her own house, contrary to the will of her parents, who had so much tenderness and affection for her that they could not bear to have her out of their sight. She went to live in Alençon, where she could not, however, venture to stay in her father's house, for fear of being solicited to marry again. Being thus privately situated, her life became one con-

tinual exercise of charity; she lodged the poor and served them with her own hands, and even gave shelter under her own roof to the unfortunate victims of vice, whom she found willing to reform. Though her aversion to a second marriage was known to be very great, her father, nevertheless, began to urge her to it, and as she positively refused each time he made the request, he at length became greatly irritated, and forbade her ever to enter his house. This harsh treatment obliged her to withdraw for some time into a Convent, where she was not, however, delivered from the importunity of her friends.

“About that time Father Paul le Jeune published an account of his missions in Canada, in which he strongly exhorted his readers to assist in the conversion of the Indians, and where, among other reasons, he made use of

the following touching expressions. 'Ah! will not some good and pious lady be found who will come to this country to gather up the precious drops of the blood of Jesus Christ, by *instructing the little Indian girls?*' These words so penetrated her heart, that ever after her mind was more frequently in Canada than within herself, and full of these sentiments she was forced to quit the convent in consequence of the death of her mother, and return to her father's house."





### CHAPTER III.

DEATH OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE'S MOTHER—VIRTUES  
WHICH SHE PRACTISES DURING HER WIDOWHOOD.

WE have admired our young widow resisting all the allurements of pleasure, after her husband's death, and transforming her house into a kind of refuge for all sorts of suffering and unfortunate creatures, and waiting upon them in company with her own servants. It was, indeed, her sweetest enjoyment to relieve the wants of all and to diffuse happiness around her, and such were the blessings with which the Almighty rewarded her charity that she was often astonished at the great improvement of morals which she witnessed among

the unfortunate beings whom she assisted. Her piety was not, however, yet satisfied, and the ardent zeal which burned in her breast, led her to desire some means of devoting herself more particularly to the service of God. We have already seen how she became interested in the Missions of Canada. Having no children to provide for, it seemed natural that she should seek some manner of rendering service to her neighbor. At times, her preference for a life of total seclusion from the world revived, and at others, she felt strong desires of devoting herself to the conversion of the poor Indians of America. Thus she struggled for several months between the tranquil Abbey of her youthful choice, and the far-distant perilous missions of Canada. At length, however, the missions prevailed over the love of her favorite retreat, and she re-

solved to devote herself to them as soon as she could obtain the approbation of her spiritual directors. Mme. de la Peltrie, therefore, consulted persons of learning and sanctity. She laid open before them with admirable sincerity all the feelings of her heart, and placed in their hands a paper containing an account of the interior attraction which the Almighty had long since given her for the conversion of souls. She therein acknowledged that it had been the subject of her communications with God for the last seven years, during which time his love had taken a stronger possession of her heart. This favor, she declared to have received during a spiritual retreat, adding that the conversion of the whole world did not seem sufficient for her zeal, and that, in her transports, she said to God incessantly: "All

is thine, O my God, my heart, my fortune, and my life !”

While awaiting this decision from the persons to whom she had given her confidence, Mme. de la Peltrie tried to place herself in a state of perfect indifference for any good work that might be proposed to her ; yet, in spite of all her efforts, one desire ever predominated in her soul—that of devoting herself and her fortune to the education of the little girls of Canada. The death of her beloved mother, and other severe trials, having previously occurred, she was thereby greatly detached from all that bound her to this earth, and consecrated herself with renewed fervor to the practice of good works. Other trials now awaited her. She fell dangerously ill, and her state soon became so alarming, that the physicians gave up all hopes of her recovery, and

only visited her through consideration for her rank. Those who attended her expected that every moment would be her last, but in this extremity, she enjoyed the perfect use of her senses, and did not forget the mission so dear to her heart. As her thoughts were constantly turning towards Canada, she one day felt inspired to make a vow to St. Joseph, first patron of this country, that "Should it please God to restore her to health, she would go there and found a house in his honor, and that she would devote her own life to the service and instruction of the Indian girls." It is worthy of remark here that she was at the time so near death, that her attendants passed the ensuing night in making for her a Habit of the Order of St. Francis, with which she desired to be buried. While those around her bed were watching her in the greatest sus-



pense, Mme. de la Peltrie fell into a profound sleep. Some hours after she awoke, and to the astonishment of all, she was perfectly cured! No one could suspect what had passed between herself and her heavenly friend, -St. Joseph, but she was more determined than ever to sacrifice her life and her fortune to the Missions of Canada. The next morning, as the physicians heard that she was not yet dead, one of them called to see her, and, having felt her pulse, he exclaimed in a transport of surprise, "Madame, you are cured, your fever is certainly gone to Canada!" He knew nothing of her secret, but Mme. de la Peltrie, who well remembered what had passed during the night, answered with a pleasant smile, "Yes, sir, it *is* gone to Canada!"

After so visible a protection of Heaven, our generous widow was more than ever pene-

trated with a sense of the Divine goodness, and she felt within her soul an increased zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. On one occasion especially, it was the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, she was impressed more strongly than usual with the conviction that it was the will of God that she should go to Canada, that he would in consequence bestow abundant graces upon her in that savage land, that she would be an humble instrument of his glory, and there end her days in peace. These interior manifestations of the will of Heaven produced in her soul the most profound admiration of the infinite goodness of God, as well as sentiments of confusion in view of her own unworthiness. She frequently wept with joy and gratitude, and renewed her hope in the promises of the Most High. However, Mme. de la Peltrie,

who possessed in an eminent degree the virtues of modesty and submission, so becoming in her sex, referred all her doubts and perplexities to the persons whom she at first consulted. These at length agreed in their decision, that it was evidently the work of God, and that she could not any longer defer the execution of her design without resisting the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

The vow which she had privately made during her illness could not, therefore, be any longer concealed; and our illustrious widow, having made some disclosures on the subject, the most violent opposition arose against her. Friends, relatives, and acquaintances, all united to condemn her pious design as a rash, romantic, and ridiculous notion. They insisted that it was mere folly to allow a young widow of her rank and delicate health, endowed with

such exterior graces, and possessed of so brilliant a fortune, to cross the seas and bury herself alive in the dismal forests of America. Her aged father began about this time to suspect that she had some pious project in view, and as he had so well succeeded in dissuading his beloved daughter from the designs which she had formed in early youth, he now again resorted to the same trying mode of persuasion. For this purpose he first endeavored to make her annul the will she had made during her late illness; this she resolutely refused to do, and he was highly offended.

Being perfectly recovered, Mme. de la Peltrie began to think seriously of the means of forwarding her proposed mission, while, strange to say, her loving parent was meditating on the execution of his favorite project,

—that of compelling her to marry a second time! We may therefore judge of the anguish of the good old gentleman when, after assuring his daughter that if she did not grant his request, she would soon see him die with grief, he heard her soliciting, in the name of heaven, his leave to consecrate her person and her fortune to the Missions of Canada. “Father,” said she to him one evening, throwing herself at his feet, after a most animated conversation upon the subject, “Father, it is the will of God that I should leave both home and country for the salvation of the poor American Indians. The Lord will bless your old age and protect me. You have sister and her children always here to comfort you. Dearest father, let me go!” This was too much for so tender a parent, and he was so completely overcome that, for a time, he could not utter

a syllable. But these first emotions soon subsided, and he conjured his daughter, in the most touching manner, not to abandon him in his old age. Each successive day he renewed this request, thus opposing his tenderness and authority to the execution of this pious undertaking.





## CHAPTER IV.

MR. DE CHAUVIGNY'S FRIENDS UNITE WITH HIM TO GAIN  
MME. DE LA PELTRIE—SHE HAS RECOURSE TO A STRA-  
TAGEM—DEATH OF MR. DE CHAUVIGNY.

UNTIL the present moment, we have seen Mme. de la Peltrie struggling against the subduing tenderness of her father alone, but henceforth we shall see her assailed by two different parties; the one headed by her father, who exhausted every effort to try and force her to marry again; the other by her sister and brother-in-law, who tried to deprive her of the management of her property. Persons of rank and merit, both in church and state, advised her to marry according to her

father's wish. Authorized by him, powerful and wealthy noblemen were constantly renewing their addresses, and, as she declined them all without exception, she saw her aged parent so unhappy that it required all her energy of character and solid virtue to resist him. In this trying position she again addressed herself to God, humbly begging him to bless a little stratagem inspired by her filial piety. As she was fully determined never to marry, and wished at the same time to please her father, she was inspired and advised to open her mind upon the subject to a man well-known for the sanctity of his life; this was Mr. de Bernières, the Royal Treasurer at Caen. Having in a long letter explained to him her trials, as well as the resolution she had taken of devoting herself to the Missions of Canada, she concluded by declaring frankly that he



could deliver her from all pursuit and annoyance by only pretending to her father that he wished to marry her, and begged of him to make that demand, on condition that such an alliance should never in reality take place. To throw more light upon the subject, we shall here again lay before our young readers an extract from the writings of the venerable Mother de L'Incarnation, who was afterwards so intimately connected with these two pure and holy souls.

“Mr. de Bernières, who was as pure as an angel, having received this letter from Mme. de la Peltrie, was surprised beyond all expression, and did not know what answer he should make to such an extraordinary request. He consulted his director and other persons of eminent piety, who advised him to accede to the lady's proposal, adding that they knew

Mme. de la Peltrie, and that she only requested his concurrence to favor her pious design. He, however, afterwards acknowledged to me that, notwithstanding all the esteem he had for Mme. de la Peltrie, he was three days trying to decide himself to make the proposed demand. He felt a great struggle, fearing to risk himself in such a perilous position ; besides this, all the world was aware of his resolution never to marry. However, after many fervent prayers addressed to heaven, he resolved to proceed in this affair, and accordingly wrote to an intimate friend of his residing at Alençon, Mr. de la Bourbonnière, charging him to make this singular demand of marriage of Mme. de la Peltrie's father. The worthy friend was delighted to have so very agreeable an opportunity of rendering an essential service to Mr. de Bernières. As soon as Mr. de Vaubegon

read the letter and understood the import of this commission, he was transported with joy, and begged of Mr. de la Bourbonnière to call on his daughter and obtain her consent. Impatient, however, to know what might be the result, he called her in private, and asked her what she thought of this gentleman's proposal. The prudent young widow answered with much respect and modesty, that as she knew Mr. de Bernières to be a favorite with himself, *she* also preferred him to all others. The nobleman already mentioned having also solicited her consent (which it was not very hard for him to obtain), he went immediately to give the answer to Mr. de Bernières, who was thereby thrown into the most awkward position, because he had to repair without delay to the city of Alençon, to make the arrange-

ments necessary for this singular form of marriage!

“Mr. de Vaubegon, though confined to his bed at the time, did not cease pressing his daughter to conclude her preparations, and as the good old gentleman at length perceived that neither herself nor Mr. de Bernières seemed in a hurry, he began to suspect that they wished to deceive him. Their friends, also, became irritated; they publicly declared that she was incapable of managing her property, and a suit at law being brought before the court of Alençon, judgment was given against her. Our virtuous widow did not, however, lose courage. As she had given her confidence to Mr. de Bernières, she informed him of all that passed. While, on one hand, she flattered her father each day, telling him that this nobleman was too honorable to fail in

keeping his word, and that she had letters informing her that his affairs would not permit him to come before the expiration of several weeks. Meanwhile this excellent man devoted himself with the zeal of an apostle to the interests of Mme. de la Peltrie.

“Having made, in secret, the journey to Alençon, he went to stay at the house of a mutual friend, where they had frequent opportunities of seeing each other and consulting the most eminent divines on the means of effecting this pretended marriage. Some were of opinion that they should marry in reality, and, with reciprocal consent, observe their former vows; others feared that her family would, in that case, trouble Mr. de Bernières on account of the property, so the resolution was taken that they should only pretend to be married.”

When the news of this apparent engage-

ment became known, it procured her the liberty of corresponding with Mr. de Bernières about her mission ; and, while her father was getting his chateau repaired and hung with new tapestry, to receive this intended son-in-law, Mme. de la Peltrie was adorning it with new furniture to amuse the world. Meanwhile, these two holy persons had frequent interviews, during which, they concerted the means of securing the success of an enterprise which had become equally dear to both. It was thus in the saloons of a Catholic nobleman, under appearances so different from reality, that Mme. de la Peltrie formed one of the most generous designs ever executed by a woman! Her friends are weaving garlands to adorn her bridal chamber, and she is laying plans to divest herself of a noble inheritance, for the love of Jesus Christ. Oh! Holy

Church, in every age, thou hast had children  
worthy of thyself!

\* \* \* \* \*

Several months had now elapsed, during which this incomparable lady and gentleman had settled various affairs relative to the Mission of Canada. The season was advancing, yet they dared not reveal the secret of this intended voyage, to the old gentleman, who, quite unconscious of their real project, was constantly urging them to celebrate their long-wished for nuptials. It is easy to imagine the distress and anxiety of Mme. de la Peltrie at this critical period. In her embarrassment, she had frequent recourse to prayer, conjuring the Almighty to give her father sufficient strength to bear this necessary separation. It, however, pleased the Lord to relieve her, in a most unexpected manner, by calling to him-

self the good old gentleman, who, happy to think that his daughter had chosen so worthy a guardian and protector, calmly resigned his soul into the hands of his Creator.







## CHAPTER V.

OTHER TRIALS OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE—SHE GAINS HER  
LAWSUIT—PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOYAGE TO CANADA.

By the death of her father, Mme. de la Peltrie saw one great obstacle to her design removed; but numerous others were soon raised against her. Persons who had formerly admired her devout life, now blamed her for the sudden and unaccountable change that appeared in her exterior; they even went so far as to reproach her in public, for having embraced a state of life which she had so formally renounced! To all these insults she answered, with a modest smile, that she felt herself bound to do the will of God. By Mr. de

Bernières' advice, she appealed to the Supreme Court of Rouen, to have her law-suit revised ; on repairing to that city, with her lawyer, they requested her to take, in Court, a certain oath, which, to them, appeared necessary for the success of her affairs. As she was very timid, she could not resign herself to this, but placing her trust in God, she begged of him, through the intercession of St. Joseph, to grant her success for His greater glory, renewing, at the same time, her vow to establish a House in Quebec, for the instruction of the Indian girls. The Almighty was pleased to hear the prayer of his devoted servant. To the astonishment of all, Mme. de la Peltrie gained her law-suit, and the very next day a deputy came to her with the joyful news ! . . . Our virtuous widow now saw her affairs so judiciously managed by Mr. de Bernières that nothing remained to be

done, but to select the nuns required for the establishment.

For this purpose Mr. de Bernières accompanied her to Paris. During her stay in that city, the party opposed to her had spies posted to watch and seize her, so as to prevent the execution of her design. To elude their pursuit, she changed dresses with her waiting-maid every time she went out; thus equipped, and walking through the streets beside her footman, she acted her part so admirably, that they could not detect her. From Paris they went to Tours, whither the Jesuit Fathers had directed them to get, in the Ursuline Convent of that city, the venerable Mother Mary de L'Incarnation, a woman of extraordinary sanctity, who in the year 1633 had a remarkable insight given to her by God, in regard to Mme. de la Peltrie and her establishment in Canada.

But we must hear what she herself says on the subject, and, as our young readers are conversant in both languages, though we translate our extracts, we will retain the original, lest we injure the admirable simplicity of expression which stamps them with the sacred seal of truth. "On her arrival the bell summoned the community. All the religious wept with joy on beholding this lady whom they regarded as an angel from heaven; while, for her part, she thought herself in paradise. For myself I can say that the moment I laid my eyes on her, I recollected my vision and recognised in her the companion with whom I had seen that great country. Her sweet expression, her complexion and her whole manners renewed the idea. Still more had I to admire the designs of divine providence when I learned from her own lips that at the very time that God enabled me

to recognise her, he had also given her the first inspirations of founding a seminary in Canada.”\*

The Ven. Archbishop of Tours gave Mme. de la Peltrie and Mr. de Bernières a most distinguished reception, and promised to do everything in his power to favor the success of their enterprise. He authorised the Ursulines to re-

\* “A son arrivée la Communauté s’assembla au son de la cloche. Toutes les religieuses pleuraient de joie de voir cette pieuse Dame qu’elles regardaient comme un ange du Ciel. Elle, de son côté, pensait être en Paradis. Pour moi, au moment que je jetai les yeux sur elle, je me souvins de ma vision, et je reconnus en elle la compagne avec qui j’avais vu ce grand pays. Sa douceur, son teint et toutes ses manières m’en renouvelèrent l’idée. Ce qui me fit encore admirer la Divine Providence, fut ce que j’appris après d’elle-même, qu’en même temps que Dieu me l’avait fait connaître, il lui avait aussi donné les premières inspirations de fonder un Séminaire en Canada.”

ceive Mme. de la Peltrie within the cloister, and pay to her all the honors due to his own rank. She was much pleased with the whole community, and very particularly so with the Ven. Mother de L'Incarnation. Mr. de Bernières, who had remained in the parlor, assisted her in the selection of the second sister required. After some deliberation, the choice fell upon the daughter of a distinguished nobleman of Anjou, Mr. de Savonnière de la Troche de St. Germain, a young religious named Marie de St. Joseph, who was held in great esteem for her piety.

Having thus happily settled all things with the Ursulines, Mme. de la Peltrie took leave of them, and leading with her the two nuns, chosen for her Mission, she went to present her respects to the Ven. Archbishop. The aged prelate, being unable to celebrate mass

for them that morning, got his chaplain to offer the Holy Sacrifice in his own private chapel, after which he made them a most touching exhortation and his clergymen sang the psalm *In exitu* and the *Magnificat*. Then he blessed them with many tears, and they left for Paris. As soon as the Queen heard of their arrival in the capital, she expressed a desire to see them, and sent an invitation to *Mme. de la Peltrie*, who conducted the two Ursulines to the Royal Palace of the Louvre, and presented them to her Majesty. The Queen bestowed much praise on their noble undertaking, presented them to the Dauphin, her son, and obtained for them the special protection of the King. During their stay in Paris, they also received an invitation from the Ursulines of that city, but as their affairs did not permit them to go there immediately,

they went to lodge at the residence of Mr. de Meules, Master of the King's Household. For the greater edification of my young readers I shall here again present them an extract from Ven. Mother's writings, which we were forced to translate in consequence of its length: "Mr. de Bernières accompanied us everywhere, and all took him to be the husband of Mme. de la Peltrie, so that during his illness, she remained all the day at his bedside; the physicians made to her their observations on his state as well as their prescriptions for the medicine. Her mask was suspended to his bed-curtains, and those who called to see him spoke to her as to his wife. Though we were all much grieved at this illness, yet it proved to us a subject of mirth and recreation. This comedy of marriage gave him other thoughts, for when he reflected on the message he had



given his friend to go and ask Mme. de la Peltrie's father to give her to him in marriage, he used to say to us: 'Oh! what will Mr. de la Bourbonniere think of me for acting such a farce? My God! what will he say? I do not dare to appear in his presence, yet I will go throw myself at his feet, and beg his pardon.' Thus we spent our recreations together, the ordinary conversation was about *our* Canada, the things requisite for the journey, and what we should do for the natives of that savage land. Mr. de Bernières had an extreme compassion for Mother St. Joseph, who was then but twenty-two years of age. As to Mme. de la Petrie and myself, he had no pity at all on us, and he used to say that he wished we might both be put to death for the faith of Jesus Christ."

All the preparations for this extraordinary

voyage were carried on very secretly in Paris. During Mr. de Bernières' illness, Father Charles Lalemant took care of their affairs; and as place could not be found for their baggage and provisions, in the vessels of the colony, Mr. de Bernières freighted a vessel purposely for them, because Mme. de la Peltrie spared no expense, provided she could succeed in her undertaking. As we have previously mentioned, the Ursulines of Paris invited our zealous missionaries to go and stay with them, but it was not until the week before their departure that they could enjoy this mutual satisfaction. While in the Convent, this fervent band gave much edification, and they had the pleasure to find one of the community, Mother St. Jerome, disposed to join the Mission. In this, however, all were severely disappointed; by the

illness of this excellent religious, she was prevented from joining the Mission to Canada, and it was not until the year following, that the Convent of Paris sent out two members to assist in the foundation at Quebec.





## CHAPTER VI.

DEPARTURE FROM PARIS—ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEY—  
LAST ADIEU—STORMY PASSAGE—SAFE ARRIVAL.

FROM Paris, Mme. de la Peltrie, accompanied by Mr. de Bernières, proceeded to Dieppe with the nuns. I shall here again introduce a note from the Ven. Mother's writings, but lest we disfigure its simple beauty of expression, we also insert the original text :

“ Our affairs being terminated at Paris, we began our journey to Dieppe, the place of embarkation, Mr. de Bernières being constantly our guardian angel. He regulated our time and observances in the carriage, and we ad-

hered to them as faithfully as in the convent. He made his meditation and observed silence as we did. Whenever we stopped, he went and provided for all our wants with singular affection. He had two servants with him, who waited on us as though they had been in our employ, especially his lackey, who knew the whole secret of the supposed marriage. At Rouen, we met Father Charles Lalemant, who had prepared everything for the voyage so secretly that it had scarcely been observed in the house. He had the charity to take us to Dieppe, and put on board all our stores and baggage. Madame de la Peltrie bore all the expense. Mr. de Bernières would have embarked with us had not Madame de la Peltrie constituted him her attorney, to defray the expenses of the foundation, and manage her affairs in France, for her relatives believed her to be

really married ; had they not they would have stopped us or at least kept us back that year. This great servant of God could not leave us, he took us to the ship accompanied by Father Lalemant, and both rendered us every good and charitable service necessary in that moment, as the sea made us very sick.”\*

\* “Nos affaires étant expédiées à Paris, nous partîmes pour nous rendre à Dieppe, le lieu de l'embarquement, Mr. de Bernières étant toujours notre Ange Gardien. Il réglait notre temps et nos observances dans le Carrosse et nous les gardions aussi exactement que dans le Monastère. Il faisait oraison et gardait le silence aussi bien que nous. A tous les gîtes, c'était toujours lui qui allait pourvoir à tous nos besoins avec une affection singulière. Il avait deux serviteurs qui le servaient et qui nous servaient comme s'ils eussent été à nous, surtout son Laquais, qui savait tout le secret du mariage supposé. Nous trouvâmes à Rouën, le Rev. Père Charles Lalemant qui avait fait préparer toutes choses pour le voyage, si secrètement, qu'à

During their stay in Dieppe, the pious foundress obtained another Ursuline; this was Mother Cecilia de la Croix, who devoted herself with admirable fervor to the Mission of Canada. In Dieppe, they were also joined by other nuns; three devoted Sisters of the Hôtel

peine s'en était-on aperçu dans la maison. Il nous fit la charité de nous conduire à Dieppe, et de faire embarquer toutes nos provisions et notre équipage, Madame de la Peltrie fournissant à toute la dépense. Mr. de Bernières se fut embarqué avec nous pour faire le voyage, si Mme. de la Peltrie ne l'eût constitué son Procureur pour faire les dépenses de sa fondation, et pour conduire ses affaires en France; car ses parens croyaient assurément qu'ils étaient mariés, sans cela, ils nous eussent arrêtées, ou du moins retardées cette année là. Ce grand serviteur de Dieu ne pouvait nous quitter. Il nous mena, dans le navire accompagnée du Rev. Père Lalemant, et tous deux nous rendirent tous les bons et charitables offices nécessaires dans cette rencontre, où la mer nous rendait fort malades."

Dieu Hospital in that city, being sent under the patronage of the Duchess d'Aiguillon to found the Hôtel Dieu, which still exists in Quebec, for the service of the poor. But we must hear again the Rev. Mother as she continues in her own beautiful language :

“ At last we had to part, and bid adieu for ever to our guardian angel, but though separated from us, his goodness made him take care of our affairs, with a more than paternal goodness. In all our conversations together, from our first interview to our separation, we saw that the man of God was possessed with His spirit, and absolutely disengaged from that of the world. I never heard him utter a word approaching levity, and though agreeable in conversation, he never forgot his due and habitual modesty. This, dear father, is a slight sketch of what passed in regard to Mme.



de la Peltrie and Mr. de Bernières ; you may rely upon it, as I endeavored to give it with more fidelity than ornament or elegance.”\*

Such was the man chosen by Heaven to assist this generous Lady and forward her foundation in Quebec. All preparations for this

\* “ Enfin, il fallut nous séparer, et quitter pour jamais, notre Ange Gardien, mais quoiqu' il fut éloigné de nous, sa bonté lui fit prendre le soin de nos affaires avec une bonté plus que paternelle. Dans toutes les conversations que nous eûmes avec lui depuis notre première entrevue jusqu'à notre séparation, nous reconnûmes que cet homme de Dieu était possédé de son esprit et entièrement ennemi de celui du monde. Jamais je ne l'ai entendu proférer une parole de légéreté ; et, quoiqu'il fut d'une agréable conversation, il ne se démentait jamais de la modestie convenable. Voila, mon Rev. Père, un petit abrégé de ce que s'est passé au sujet de Mme. de la Peltrie et de Mr. de Bernières ; vous pouvez y ajouter foi parce que je me suis pfforcée de le faire avec plus de fidélité que d'ornement et d'élégance.”

long and perilous journey, being now, as we have seen, happily concluded, this generous nobleman, after promising Mme. de la Peltrie that he would ever be her friend, and the guardian of all her interests in France, conducted her with the nuns on board the vessel, and placing them under the care of the Jesuit Fathers going to Canada, bid her a last adieu.

Thus ended the pretended engagement of this virtuous lady and gentleman, which caused, at the time, so much inquiry and excitement among the nobility in France, and which, after a lapse of two hundred years, cannot fail exciting feelings of admiration in the heart of every virtuous woman! Mme. de la Peltrie thus forsook the gay and brilliant circles of polished society in France, to live and die in labor, privation, and suffering, among the poor disgusting Indians of Canada, and Mr. de Bernières

returned to his royal commission at Caen, where he devoted himself until his death, to the interests of the Ursuline Convent in Quebec! Let us now behold our heroines upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic. They heave no sigh, they shed no tear, as their own dear France, with its vine-clad hills, recedes from their view! The smiles of Heaven are around them, and they behold the immensity of God reflected on the fair mirror of a calm unruffled sea! They fear not: dark clouds may gather, and the lightnings flash around; the tempest may howl, and the thunders roar, but they trust in "the Lord who ruleth o'er land and sea;" they are going on His errand, and they know that He will protect them in life and death. With joyful hearts they therefore sing his praises, and assemble at regular hours to present Him their humble tribute of adoration. Thus, they

passed the first few days of their journey, but soon an awful storm swept over the mighty deep. Darkness gathered around them, like drapery of the tomb, and the frail vessel was tossed about like an atom, on the bosom of the angered billows: the stout hearts of the sea-men quail within them, while these delicate ladies remain undaunted in courage, addressing words of hope and consolation to all. In this age of progress and refinement, we pass very comfortably over the seas, in our modern packets and swift-sailing steamers, and we cannot, therefore, form any idea of the privations and hardships endured, two hundred years ago, by these heroic ladies.

The improvements of the nineteenth century have rendered these long voyages mere pleasure trips; at the present day our fair and smiling travellers are conveyed in a few days

from the shores of the St. Lawrence to those of Europe; in 1639, the clumsy uncomfortable vessel lingered three months on the same route! Thus it was with Mme. de la Peltrie and her pious companions. Storm after storm arose, and sickness broke out on board, while they were continually tossed about by contrary winds. Three or four times the captain and crew gave the vessel up for lost, but our devoted Missionaries did not lose their confidence in Heaven, and Heaven rewarded them, for all arrived safe in view of this long-wished for port, on the 1st of August, 1639.





## CHAPTER VII.

LANDING OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE AND THE NUNS—RECEPTION GIVEN TO THEM BY THE CHEVALIER DE MONTMAGNY, GOVERNOR-IN-CHIEF, AND ALL ORDERS OF SOCIETY IN QUEBEC.

THE vessel bearing these generous ladies had long been anxiously expected in Quebec. Great preparations had been made to receive them, and as soon as they appeared in sight, the loud voices of the cannons in the Fort, announced to the whole colony that the day of their arrival was one set apart for rejoicing. The churches were decorated, the shops were closed, labor of every kind was suspended, the Governor-General, Mr. de Montmagny,

ordered out his troops, and this gallant Knight of Malta, who honored virtue in every form, placing himself at their head, marched to the landing-place to receive this heroic band of Christian ladies. We have before us a copy of the act of reception, signed and sealed 219 years ago, in which the brave Charles Huon de Montmagny observes: "We sent a boat and went ourselves to receive them on the bank of the river, accompanied by the principal inhabitants and followed by most of the people, who evinced extraordinary joy on the occasion, in which we joined by a discharge from the cannons of the fort, and led them to the fort, where the TE DEUM was chanted to thank God for their happy arrival, and the great good which we hope, to the glory of God and the common benefit, as is already shown to the general satisfaction of the French

and the Indians.”\* All the French inhabitants, dressed in their Sunday attire, followed the troops, rending the air with their acclamations, and the poor Indians, who had never before witnessed such a scene, flocked in crowds from the neighboring woods to behold these extraordinary white women who had so often been described to them by their devoted fathers.

\* “Nous envoyâmes une chaloupé, et allâmes nous-mêmes les recevoir au bord de la rivière, accompagnés des principaux habitans, et suivis de la plupart du peuple qui y faisait paraître une joie extraordinaire, à laquelle nous concourûmes par le bruit des canons de nostre Fort, et les amenâmes à l’Eglise où fut chanté le Te Deum laudamus pour remercier Dieu de leur heureuse arrivée et du grand bien que nous espérons à la gloire de Dieu et à l’édification et utilité commune, comme desja il est manifeste au contentement général des Français et des sauvages.”



These pious ladies as they landed knelt down with religious devotion, and kissed, with feelings of inexpressible gratitude to God, the rough shore of this land of exile, which to them appeared fairer than their native bowers. After the first compliments and salutations the Governor and suite conducted them, amid the beating of drums and the roaring of cannon, to the cathedral. The whole population followed, and as it was early in the day, the Holy Sacrifice was offered in thanksgiving to God. Mass being concluded, a solemn Te Deum was sung by the Jesuit Fathers and other clergymen there assembled; these duties being fulfilled, all orders united again to conduct Mme. de la Peltrie, the Ursulines, and the Hospitalières, to the dwellings prepared for their reception. As to the Ursulines, they were conducted to a small dwelling divided

into two apartments, situated on the river St. Charles, and built on a wharf. That poor uncomfortable lodging they occupied until the 21st of November, 1642, when they took possession of the Convent built on the land conceded to them by the Governor in the Upper Town of Quebec. As soon as they arrived at their humble dwelling, several little Indian girls were presented to Mme. de la Peltrie, who folded them affectionately in her arms with all the rapture of a fond mother's love, and the three nuns followed her example. The Indians stood amazed before them, gazing with astonishment as if they had been divinities descended from Heaven, and, to express their admiration, all they could do was to raise their hands to their mouth, which is their mode of acknowledging the inability of expressing intense feeling. The day after

their arrival our zealous missionaries were conducted to Sillery, where they found all the sedentary Indians assembled to receive them. This visit was a cause of great joy to the natives and of extreme consolation to the French ladies, who did not expect to find the poor savages of Canada so well disposed to receive the sublime teachings of Christianity. But the Jesuit Fathers were the visible angels of that flourishing congregation. Under their fostering care the wilderness rejoiced, and Sillery offered a miniature of the far-famed missions of Paraguay. Let us hear what the Ven. Mother says on the subject: "It is admirable to see our good Indians of Sillery, and the great care they take to have God served in their town, the laws of the church inviolably kept, and faults punished to appease God. One of the chief cares of the chiefs is to

banish every general or particular occasion of sin. You can never enter the chapel without finding some Indians there praying with a devotion that enraptures you. If any one forgets the faith or morality of a Christian he retires self-banished, conscious that whether or no he must do penance or be shamefully expelled.”\*

\* “C'est une chose admirable de voir nos bons sauvages de Sillery, et le grand soin qu'ils apportent à ce que Dieu soit servi dans leur Bourgade, que les lois de l'Eglise soient gardées inviolablement, que les fautes y soient chatiées pour apaiser Dieu; l'une des principales attentions des capitaines, est à éloigner tout ce qui peut être occasion en général ou en particulier. L'on ne va point à la Chapelle qu'on ne trouve quelque sauvage en prières avec tant de dévotion que c'est une chose ravissante. S'il s'en trouve quelqu'un qui se demente de la foi ou des mœurs de chrétien, il s'éloigne et se bannit lui-même, sachant bien que bongré, malgré, il lui faudrait faire pénitence ou être honteusement chassé de la Bourgade.”

On the return of these pious ladies to their humble residence on the banks of the river St. Charles, six little Indian girls and several French children being confided to the care of the nuns, Mme. de la Peltrie begged of the Ven. Mother to let her have care of them, so that this generous lady, who had given up her whole fortune to the Ursulines, only requested in return, these first little wild fruits of the Mission, and as may readily be supposed, the Ven. Mother having granted her request, she entered immediately with much fervor upon the exercise of her new functions.

The devoted foundress began her Mission by making up some dresses to cover these half-naked scholars. For this purpose she drew out of her stores some crimson camlet, and dressed them all alike. When the Indian men and women beheld their children thus

attired, their admiration and gratitude knew no bounds; they became so extremely affectionate, that they remained around the nuns from morning until night, like domesticated fawns, and as the poor ladies could not, with propriety, take their own meals without offering some food to these uninvited guests, Mme. de la Peltrie had to keep constantly on the fire, a large pot of Sagamité, a kind of Indian porridge, which she presented with her own hand to these famished visitors. These, in their turn, often pressed the noble widow to go and eat in their huts, an invitation which she often accepted, and enjoyed with more pleasure than she had formerly done the society of polished knights and high-born ladies. During this first year of her residence in Canada, the sweetest diversion of Mme. de la Peltrie was to conduct her little favorites,

after school-hours, to the grounds which had been conceded to herself and the nuns, by the Governor-General, in the name of the King of France. These grounds were situated in the centre of that part of the city, formerly called Stadacona, now the upper town of Quebec. It was then a most lovely and inviting spot, covered with its original sugar-maple, pine, birch, and ash trees, all of which, with the exception of one, have long since submitted to the laws of decay. This old relic of by-gone days yet stands at the north-eastern angle of the present building. Though shattered by many a storm, the old ash tree still offers, to the inmates of the Ursuline Convent, a grateful shade during the summer months; happy in its *old age*, to have excited the sympathies of a revered clergyman, Venerable Father Maguire, who did not deem it unworthy of filling a page in

the interesting notes which he wrote on this foundation, a few years before his much-lamented death.

To gratify our young readers, we shall here offer to them, in the original text, the beautiful passage traced by his graceful pen :

#### THE OLD ASH TREE.

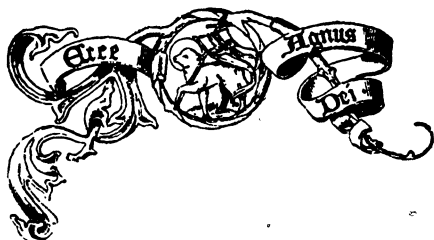
“It would be unpardonable to pass in silence the old ash tree, the giant of our ancient forest, which has occupied, for the space of five hundred years, at least, the area formed by the angle of the choir, and the eastern extremity of the wing of the Holy Family. Silent witness of the events which have succeeded each other, during its long existence, in this remote region of the civilized world, why is it not endowed with a voice to relate the history of the generations of red men which it has seen suc-



cessively reposing under its luxuriant foliage!  
.... Why may it not reveal to us the dark secrets of war and peace and treachery, confided to its silent discretion! . . . describe the savage feats of scalping and slow-fire tortures, and cannibal festivities, which are known to have been more horribly frequent at some periods than at others! . . . . . But what must have been the amazement of this venerable witness of ages past, when, about two hundred years ago, it saw a timid troop of white virgins come in the footsteps of the red men, and settle with them, beneath its shade! . . . when it first heard the sound of their melodious hymns and enraptured aspirations to the author of life! . . . when it compared their habits of neatness and order, their air of modesty and propriety, with the disgusting manners and barbarous customs of these untaught and brutish children of na-

ture. No doubt, it took them for spirits of heaven, alighting upon this earth! . . . . The charm, did not, however, vanish for our old tree with this interesting era: it must have beheld, with untiring pleasure, those events of more recent date, so glorious to religion and humanity, and at times, those fearful accidents of fire and warfare! . . . .

“In fine, this worthy memorial of centuries past, which furnishes to all an ample subject of serious reflection, has acquired a sacred right to the protection of the Monastery. The kindest care is due to its existence, and each member of the community is, in duty, bound to contribute in softening the ills attendant upon its old age!” . . . .



## CHAPTER VIII.

**ZEAL OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS  
—ARRIVAL OF TWO SISTERS FROM THE URSULINES OF  
PARIS—SHE LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST CON-  
VENT—HER JOURNEY TO MONTREAL.**

By all that we have hitherto witnessed of the heroic virtues of Mme. de la Peltrie, and her faithful correspondence with the special grace of her vocation to the Missions of Canada, we may now foresee the rapid progress which this virtuous lady afterwards made in perfection during the thirty-one years that she lived among the people to whom her entire existence had been devoted. In her fine character

every Christian virtue was resplendent, but one particularly outshone the rest ; this was her untiring zeal for the conversion of the heathen Indians. On her arrival she had been agreeably surprised to find such great numbers of natives, who had been instructed by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, as well as the Franciscans, but she knew that multitudes were yet dispersed far and wide throughout the country, who had never given a thought to God, or once bent the knee in prayer. These hapless souls she burned to convert, and would, in her holy ardor, have willingly traversed mountain, lake, and forest, crying to all that there was a God above, who created them for His service, a Jesus who died to redeem them, a paradise to reward the good, and a hell to punish the wicked ! The prudence and discretion of Mme. de la Peltrie, were, however, so

great, that she moderated and controlled these desires for two whole years, during which time she shared the labor, hardships, and sufferings, which the Ursulines had to endure in the small uncomfortable dwelling, which they occupied until their Convent was finished at Stadacona. In addition to the cold, and innumerable privations, these sufferings became intense for such delicate ladies some months after their arrival, when, to crown these trials, the small-pox broke out among the natives, and the contagion reached the children confided to the nuns. To give our young readers an idea of the life they led at this period, I shall here introduce another extract from Ven. Mother's writings.

“ All the linen that our foundress had given us for our own use, as well as what our Mothers in France had sent us, was used up in

cleansing and covering our poor Indians. It is a singular consolation for us to forego all that is necessary for ourselves in order to gain souls to Christ, and we would rather be destitute of all than leave our little girls in the insupportable filth which they bring from their cabins. When given to us they are as naked as the worms of the earth, and they have to be washed from head to foot, on account of the grease which their parents put on their whole bodies, and for all our care in frequently changing their linen and clothes, it takes a great while to deliver them from the swarms of vermin bred by the grease. One sister devotes a part of her day to this. It is a post that all eagerly ambition, and she who gets it deems herself rich in the happy lot: those who are deprived of it, deem themselves unworthy and remain in humiliation. Our foundress has ex-

exercised it almost the whole year : now Mother St. Joseph enjoys this happiness.”\*

\* “ Tout le linge que Mme. notre Fondatrice nous avait donné pour nos usages, aussi bien que celui que nos Mères de France nous avaient envoyé, a été consumé à nettoyer et à couvrir nos pauvres sauvages. Ce nous est une singulière consolation de nous priver de tout ce qui nous est nécessaire pour gagner des âmes à Jésus-Christ, et nous aimerions mieux manquer de tout, que de laisser nos petites filles dans la saleté insupportable qu’elles apportent de leurs cahanes. Quand on nous les donne, elles sont nues comme le ver de terre, et il les faut laver de la tête aux pieds, à cause de la graisse dont leurs parents les oignent par tout le corps, et quelque diligence qu’on fasse et quoiqu’on les change souvent de linge et d’habits, on ne peut de longtemps les délivrer de l’abondance de vermine causée par cette graisse. Une soeur emploie une partie du jour à cela. C’est une office que chacune ambitionne avec empressement, celle qui l’emporte, s’estime riche d’un si heureux sort, celles qui en sont privées s’en

Behold now Madame de la Peltrie and her nuns vieing with each other for an opportunity of scouring the vermin off these poor filthy little Indian girls, and then sharing with them their last morsel of bread. Listen again to the Venerable Mother: "Beside the girls, and Indian women that we receive within the house, the men also visit us at the parlor, and we endeavor to show them the same charity with which we treat their women, and it is a great comfort for us to deprive ourselves of the last morsel of bread to give it to these poor people, so as to inspire them with the love of our Divine Lord and His holy faith."

To this testimony, we shall add one of venerable Father Maguire's notes.

*estiment indignes et demeurent dans l'humiliation. Mme. notre Fondatrice l'a exercée presque toute l'année, aujourd'hui, c'est la Mère St. Joseph qui jouit de ce bonheur."*



“ But it is time to return to our subject, and say that the way of the Ursulines, in this confined house, that is in their first house on the quay, was one of almost unexampled pain and suffering; the total want not only of every kind of comfort, but of provisions, linen, and even clothes for their own use, amid Indians prostrated by the horrible and disgusting disease (small-pox), cannot be described. But they were children of St. Ursula already become saints by corresponding to the graces of their state.”

Yes, we love to repeat it, they were worthy daughters of St. Ursula! Most unheard of trials did not abate their courage and fervor, and, for this reason, it pleased the Lord to reward them, by inspiring other sisters with the noble emulation of sharing their labors and imitating their virtues. While our fervent

missioners were yet in France, we saw the desire which the Ursulines of Paris had to take part in the foundation of the Convent in Quebec. Having, in the course of the following year, obtained permission from the Archbishop, they selected two distinguished subjects, Mlle. de Flécelles de St. Athanase and Mlle. Le Buble de St. Claire, and sent them to Quebec under the guidance of Father Ménard of the Society of Jesus. The Convent of Paris furnished all things necessary for the journey, paid their travelling expenses, and generously settled on each of them a handsome annuity. Great opposition arose on the part of their relatives and friends, and they had hard struggles to tear themselves away from all that was dear to them; but at length their constancy prevailed over nature, and these generous Sisters bid farewell for ever, to the com-

forts and attractions of their native land, to go and live among savages in a poor and lowly dwelling, subject to all the privations attendant on the most rigorous poverty, exposed to the intense cold during the long Canadian winter, and in constant danger of being massacred by the barbarous Iroquois.

But such was their zeal for extending the glory of God, and aiding in the salvation of souls, that all these sacrifices did not call forth one sigh! These pious ladies embarked at Dieppe, with two Hospitalnuns for the Hôtel-Dieu, on board a vessel whose auspicious name, *L'Espérance*, seemed to promise all things desirable for travellers. However, trials were before them. Shortly after their embarkation, and while yet in view of port, an awful storm arose; another vessel just beside them was dashed to pieces on the rocks, and of one hun-

dred and twenty passengers on board, only three lives were saved. But our pious sisters did not lose their confidence in God, and those delicate ladies, who, in an excursion of pleasure often trembled in a bark on their own unruffled river Seine, were now calm and unmoved, though surrounded by danger and exposed to evident destruction.

“I know not,” says Father Ménard, “if in this century, any one has seen ships tossed about so long in view of port, or beaten by such furious winds! Yet, as this tempest prevented us from leaving port, it also protected us against the enemy’s frigates who had been watching our departure, for it appears that if we had raised anchor one day earlier, we should have all been captured. As soon as we were at large, the wind favored us all the time, and the piety and devotion of all on board were very

remarkable. On the Feast of Corpus-Christi, we raised a splendid altar in our admiral's cabin; all hands joined to adorn a magnificent 'Repository' at the prow of the vessel, and our Lord, who was pleased to receive our humble adorations on the watery element, gave us a calm and beautiful day. We made a solemn procession around the vessel in perfect order. Our brother, Dominic Scott, in surplice, carried the cross. At his side were two young midshipmen, then followed the Ursulines and Hospitalières, with angelic modesty, bearing lighted tapers. After the priest who carried the Blessed Sacrament, marched the admiral, then the officers and crew; the sea and air re-echoed to the roaring of our cannon, while heavenly spirits invisibly joined in the praises, which, from our hearts, were poured forth in presence of our sovereign King." At length,

our pious travellers reached this Port of Québec in safety. On the 1st of July, 1640, the Chevalier de Montmagny, Gov.-General, accompanied by the officers of his staff, went to receive them on landing, and presented them to Mme. de la Peltrie, who had also gone forth to meet them with her little Indians. After the first joyful salutation, they were conducted to the little log chapel of the Ursulines, where a hymn of thanksgiving was sung by all present; then Mme. de la Peltrie took them to the Castle of St. Louis, where the Governor and principal citizens were assembled to compliment them on their safe arrival. After this visit, the happy foundress led back her new sisters to the poor habitation occupied by herself and the other nuns. Here they found plenty of labor, and, having soon acquired from the Venerable Mother, a practical knowledge

of the Algonquin and Huron languages, they rendered much service to the community by their success in teaching and their exemplary lives. It will, no doubt, gratify our young readers, to find here some fragments of the letter in which Rev. Father Ménard, their guardian angel during the voyage, renders an account of them to their Rev. Mother the Superior of the Ursulines in Paris.

“ MY REVEREND MOTHER,

“ This letter is due to you in virtue of the charge I had of your sisters. I am desirous you should know that I so much value this privilege that I place it among the special graces by which our Lord has drawn me most efficaciously to himself. I did not expect that in a sex so delicate, in an age yet so youthful, and in times so degenerate as

ours, there could be found hearts so generous and ardent for perfection. Their example has covered me with confusion! . . . .

“Perhaps they will confidentially acknowledge to you as to their Mother, the sufferings they endured on the passage. As to me, though I tried to render myself as free as possible, I could not perceive anything, and many have been deceived by their exterior so unchangeably gay, that I took them to be as healthy as myself through ignorance, not knowing how to discern between the operations of nature and grace. For this reason I may have shown less compassion to them than to the Hospital sisters who were much more sensibly incommoded than they, by the bad weather and the agitation of the vessel. I will therefore bring them into port in the same state of health as they were confided to



me, their eminent degree of virtue being sufficient to supply for bodily weakness. We lived together like brother and sister, with this exception only that they treated me with much more deference than I should have found desirable or reasonable, as I felt rather like a companion than a superior as they forced me to be, seeking in all things my approbation with a degree of submission that confounded me. In all things else nothing could surpass the sweetness of our pious interviews and exercises of devotion which we discharged throughout."

A little further, he adds: "We cast anchor at Bonaventure Isle, for the first time, on the 19th of June; there I availed myself of the opportunity of discharging a vow which I had made to the glorious St. Joseph to celebrate Mass in his honor, as soon as I should land on

the shores of Canada. The day was fine and pleasant, a circumstance that made me enjoy exceedingly the charms of nature, then blooming in all the beauty of spring, while the nightingale's song resounded through the greencedar and pine woods, as sweetly as in our own native groves of old France. Our sisters did not feel courage enough to follow me, or, I should rather say, they were not quite so portable as myself in such a light skiff. While on shore, after satisfying my own private devotion, I made for them a collection of all the beautiful flowers and rare plants that I could find in the surrounding woods, so as to furnish them with a new subject for admiring and praising the infinite goodness of God, so liberal towards poor savages who never loved Him. The currants, strawberries, and raspberries seemed more beautiful than in France: nothing was wanting

to our enjoyment that day, save the presence of a few Indians; and it pleased Divine Providence to give us that consolation also. They came to us in their light canoes, and seemed quite friendly, and much less barbarous than they are represented to us in France. It is true that, at first sight, there is something revolting in their dark complexion and black oily hair, and above all, in their nakedness; for the skins, which cover only about half their bodies, are not sufficient to protect them from the cold in the winter and the flies in the summer. We made them form the sign of the cross, and we found that they were not without some knowledge of Christianity." . . .

In the course of the following year, 1641— all the materials being prepared for the build- of the new convent, Mme. de la Peltrie being satisfied with the workmen whom Mr. de Ber-

nières had sent her from France, she laid the foundation of the first building raised in Canada by the Ursulines.

About this time the arrival of Mlle. Mansé and Mr. de Maisonneuve caused some excitement in the colony, as they were going to raise new establishments in Montreal, so as to forward the conversion of the Indians. This was more than sufficient to excite the ardent and somewhat chivalrous zeal of a descendant of chevaliers! Mme. de la Peltrie, therefore, manifested great interest in these enterprises, and even went to Montreal, where, as the chronicle adds, she had everything in readiness to go to the Huron mission of St. Joseph, had not a Jesuit Father from these parts dissuaded her from so doing, by making known to her the countless perils attendant on such a journey.



## CHAPTER IX.

MME. DE LA PELTRIE RETURNS TO QUEBEC—JOYFUL RECEPTION AT HOME—VIRTUES OF OBEDIENCE AND POVERTY WHICH SHE PRACTISES IN THE URSULINE CONVENT.

As we have just seen, Mme. de la Peltrie left Quebec for some time to try and extend her Mission in the upper parts of the country. This she did contrary to the wishes of all her friends. From Montreal, she wrote most affectionate letters to her ever-dear sisters, assuring them that she only wished to extend the Ursuline Order. This was, however, not desirable at that period, and her Venerable friend, Mother de L'Incarnation, as well as

the Jesuit Fathers, and the Governor-General, could not be reconciled to her absence from the capital, where her virtues had given the highest edification, as we see by all the old manuscripts of the times. Alluding to the public devotions, in which she always took an edifying part, the Venerable Mother, writing to France during Mme. de la Peltrie's absence, observes: "Our foundress usually took our pupils to the procession and went at the head of the women and Indian girls, after which we prepared a banquet for them; now that she has left us she is deprived of that consolation."\*

\* "Mme. notre Fondatrice avait coutume de conduire nos Séminaristes aux processions et de marcher à la tête des femmes et des filles sauvages, après quoi, nous leur préparions un Festin; aujourd'hui, qu'elle est éloignée de nous, elle est privée de cette consolation!"

The poor Indians, as well as the nuns, were inconsolable ; all therefore joined to solicit her return. Mme. de la Peltrie at length understood by all these circumstances, that God did not require of her this new sacrifice, and that she could contribute more effectually and securely by devoting herself anew to the duties which she so nobly discharged in the institution that owed its existence to her generosity. Thus persuaded that her own important undertaking in Quebec was more worthy of her own undivided attention and affections, she returned to her own house, where she was received by the nuns and the children with transports of joy.

From that moment Mme. de la Peltrie embraced again the rules and restraints of the cloister, observing them with the utmost punctuality for the space of twenty-nine years,

that is to say, until her death, though she refused, through humility, to wear the habit of the order, saying that she was not worthy to appear in the garments worn by the consecrated spouses of Jesus Christ. Though the Venerable Mother tried on all occasions to make her spare herself, yet she was ever the first to seek the most humiliating and laborious employments. We have seen how she scoured and washed the little savages, and made their clothing, but it would fill a volume to detail the various services which the noble-hearted widow rendered each day, both to the parents who daily frequented the parlor, and to the children who were constantly with the nuns, and required their care and attention both in sickness and in health. The number of Indians instructed by Mme. de la Peltrie and her nuns would seem incredible to our



modern comprehensions, if it were not so plainly attested by the writings of the Venerable Mother, which bear the seal of historic veracity, and whose authority has been acknowledged by every judicious writer in Canada since the days of Charlevoix. The Venerable Mother says: "I have not lost my pains in studying a foreign and barbarous language, which has now become to me so easy, that I have not the slightest trouble in teaching the holy mysteries of the faith to our neophytes. We have had this year a large number, more than fifty scholars, besides above seven hundred visits of passing Indians, all of whom we assisted both spiritually and corporally. As to the extension of Christianity, here are three nations who have come to settle permanently at Sillery, and whose daughters are to be sent to our seminary." . . . And

again, she says: "Mother St. Joseph is studying the Huron language, in which she succeeds very well, we are, however, still more in need of the Algonquin."

We have before observed that Mme. de la Peltrie was, in all things, perfectly faithful to the rules and regulations of the Convent, but the inward submission of her will and judgment were still more remarkable than her exterior punctuality. Of this fact, one example will fully convince our young readers. Desirous to render her virtues more perfect, she at one time resolved to renounce the privilege which she had enjoyed of assisting, at the head of the Indian women and children, at the public processions; also, that of going out of the cloister sometimes, to visit the Indian chapels, as well as the Castle of St. Louis, when the state of her affairs required it. Actuated by

this desire, she went to throw herself at the feet of the Venerable Mother, beside her own waiting-maid, Miss Barrè, on the day upon which the latter went to receive the Superior's blessing, before entering the noviciate. Surprised and moved at so touching a sight, the Venerable Mother de L'Incarnation burst into tears, and, raising our virtuous foundress from the ground, she exclaimed: "We know, Madame, that you are all ours, but, for the sake of our dear Indians, you must not relinquish your visits among them, nor change the modest becoming dress in which they first beheld you." Without one word of objection, this admirable lady submitted to the decision of her dear friend, and returned, like a gentle child, to her usual occupations. This perfect abnegation of *self* appeared in all things; when any general duty was to be fulfilled, or

any particular order given by the Superiors, all the other members of the Community felt encouraged to obey on seeing the good grace with which their respected foundress performed these actions. During all hours in the day, from four o'clock in the morning until nine at night, she was so exact to the exercises prescribed, that no one else could get to the chapel for prayer, or elsewhere for employment, before her; and a tradition of our ancient Mothers informs us, that "the regular observances were never so punctually announced, as while Mme. de la Peltrie had care of ringing the Convent bell!"

Her love of religious poverty was also very great. On her arrival in Canada, seeing the extreme destitution of the churches and chapels, she sacrificed all her silk, velvet, and satin dresses, to make vestments for the clergy, and

antependiums, &c., for the altars, as also every article which she possessed of Valenciennes lace, lawn, and fine linen, and made a solemn promise to wear nothing but the coarsest kind of linen and woollen clothing. Having obtained permission of the Venerable Mother to take care of the nuns' undergarments, she waited upon them like a faithful servant for the space of eighteen years; and as the amiable foundress went, at the end of each week, to bring them their clean linen, she presented it with the most charming politeness, making her humble apology when these things did not appear to her as comfortable as she wished them to be. Every destitute being that presented himself before her, brought vividly to her mind the sacred person of Jesus Christ, and never did she esteem herself so happy as when she could render some assist-

ance to those whom she saw unpitied or despised by the world. One day some gentle reproach having been made to her about wearing such old and patched clothing, and the person who addressed her having added that, "these things would do better for the poor." "For the poor," she exclaimed, "ah! if it were in my power, I would give them all *new* clothing." The absolute poverty to which this generous lady reduced herself, would not be understood even by the nuns themselves at the present day, if ancient documents did not exist in our archives to prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Her inventory alone, which we here place before our young readers, will suffice to convince them of the truth of our assertion. . . . .

## INVENTORY OF MADAME DE LA PELTRIE.

On the 25th of November, 1671, the Sieur de Lotbinière, with several other crown officers, came to the Convent, to take, according to the French laws of the time, an inventory of the clothing, and various other movables appertaining to the deceased foundress. After enumerating a few remnants of fustian, linen, &c., found in a small wardrobe, they go on, naming various articles of clothing and light furniture, so poor and humble that it is really astonishing to us how so rich and noble a lady could accommodate herself:

A mantlé of serge d'Aumale.

A dress of serge de Caen.

Two old serge aprons.

Three old silk caps.

One old velvet cap.

One old delaine cap.

Three pairs of old woollen stockings.

Two pairs of thread stockings.

One old cape.

Three pairs of old slippers.

One pair of corded shoes.

In her room were also found a plain wooden bedstead, straw bed, small mattress, white quilt, and a few yards of fustian, serving as summer curtains.

A straw-bottomed chair.

A stool of the same kind.

An under skirt, and an old cloth mantle.

A plain wooden table, upon which were found two books, viz. the Epistles and Gospels for the whole year, and a Selection of Meditations.

Two candlesticks, one tin, the other wood.

In another press were found—

One serge apron, two pairs of stockings, and one little writing-desk.

Four plain engravings on paper.

A crucifix painted on wood.

A box, in which were found twenty-eight letters addressed to Mme. de la Peltrie from France.

Let us now compare this admirable exposition of religious poverty, with the first advances

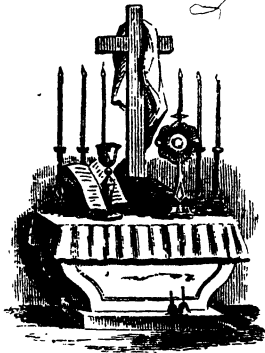


made by the noble foundress, previous to her leaving France, thirty-one years before her death! Writing from Paris, to a friend at Tours, on the 26th February, 1639, the Venerable Mother says: "What shall I say of Mme. de la Peltrie? Her goodness confuses me exceedingly! She is an admirable Mother who spares no expense for us; I fear she will go too far, and I beg you will write to her on the subject!"\* Do we not here see the virtues of this illustrious lady increase with her years? In France she required the interference of her friends, to prevent her from exceeding in generosity; in Canada, her house, her food, her

\* Que dirais-je de Madame de la Peltrie? Elle me met dans de continuelles confusions, par ses bontés en mon endroit. C'est une Mère admirable qui n'épargne aucune dépense à notre sujet; je crains qu'elle n'y excède, et je vous prie de lui en écrire.

clothing were common property, and she herself was reduced to receive alms! . . . . .

Oh! beautiful flower of old France, your fragrance yet perfumes our western wilds!





## CHAPTER X.

BURNING OF THE FIRST CONVENT IN 1650, AND OTHER SEVERE TRIALS—HUMILITY, CHARITY, AND SELF-DENIAL OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE—DEATH OF REV. MOTHER ST. JOSEPH.

THE love of privations and suffering being a natural consequence of the fervent practice of religious poverty, we will not be surprised to find that Mme. de la Peltrie excelled also in this perfection, and to prove to our young readers, that she found in Canada abundant means of gratifying this dear affection of her heart.

we will here insert an account of the fire which destroyed the Convent in 1650, as it so particularly refers to one of the most trying periods of her life. . . . .

The 30th of December, 1650, was a day of deep mourning for the Ursulines of Quebec, as they saw their first Monastery cease, as it were, to exist. Some hot embers having been left in a fire-pan to heat the dough prepared by a sister for baking, were unfortunately forgotten there, while the whole community retired to rest, as usual about nine o'clock. Shortly after, the dough-trough took fire, then the flames spread through the bakehouse, which was situated at the northern extremity of the building, beneath our present refectory. In a few moment the conflagration spread, and reduced the whole house to ashes.

The only things that could be saved were a

few articles belonging to the sacristy, and some important papers of the community which the Venerable Mother threw out of a window. The nuns only saved themselves by running out of the house half-dressed, without shoes or stockings, and the children, particularly the little Indian girls, were almost naked. A Huron woman (Cecile Archatsi) threw herself out of a window in the upper story without sustaining any serious injury from so dangerous a fall upon the ice. All their provisions laid up in the fall, as well as those received from France, were totally destroyed in the cellars, as these were not vaulted. But to understand more clearly the state of destitution to which the inmates of the Convent were, by this accident, reduced, we must hear the simple and touching narrative written by the Venerable Mother herself, who seems

to have forgotten her own sufferings on beholding those of Mme. de la Peltrie. . . .

“ If the letters which we sent by the way of New England, and by the fishermen, were handed to you, you have been already informed that the hand of God has visited us, and reduced us to the last extremity, as I will now relate. On Friday, in the octave of the Nativity of our Lord, a lay sister-novice, having put into the dough-trough a firepan filled with burning coals to raise it sufficiently for baking in the morning, forgot to withdraw it before she left at night, so that the fire soon spread all over the bakehouse. About eleven o'clock at night, one of our sisters, who slept with the oldest of the children in the apartment just over the bakehouse, was suddenly startled by the crackling noise of the flames as

they increased and spread. Greatly alarmed, she rang the bell, and flew up to the dormitory, crying aloud, "Sauvez-vous!" Fly! It was, indeed, time to make our escape; we break down the grates, try to save the children, but not without imminent danger to ourselves; we all pass through the sacristy (at the south end of the house) the flames having invaded every other avenue. I had a wish to go up to our little dépôt, or magazine, and throw out some articles of clothing, as I foresaw that several of our poor sisters would have to fly out of the house half dressed, but our good God, wishing to spare my life, deterred me from so doing, by giving me another thought—that of saving the papers of the community, and I ran to secure them. Though the danger was not so great in that direction, I had, however, a fire on each side, and one

behind me. In this extreme peril I made an inclination to my crucifix, and abandoned myself to the divine will. The Reverend Father Superior of your house, and all your Reverend Fathers, threw themselves into the chapel, carried away the Blessed Sacrament, and saved the greater part of the things which were in the sacristy: one of your brothers nearly lost his life in the flames. As soon as I completed my escape, I found all my poor sisters half-naked on the snow, which, at this season, is very deep; praying to Heaven there, they beheld this trial, with as much calm resignation, as if the misfortune did not at all concern them. For this reason several persons present, who were greatly affected at the sight of this awful distress, exclaimed that our sisters had either lost their senses, or were altogether transported by the love of God. I assure you,



Reverend Father, that we never felt so powerful an effect of grace as we did at that trying hour, in which we were, in a few minutes, deprived of all that we possessed in this world. Clothing, provisions, furniture, house, all was consumed in the space of a few hours! . . . But, ah! what would have been your feelings had you seen our foundress, Mme. de la Peltrie, so delicate, so sensible to the cold, standing barefoot on the ice, without any other covering but a light tunic! . . . The night was clear, the heavens spangled with stars, and the frost intense. It was not windy, but as the fire progressed a slight wind arose, that threw back the flames towards the gardens and fields. Had it not been for this, your college, the fort, and neighboring buildings would have been enveloped in our ruin, as the sparks were carried to a great distance by the vehe-

mence of the flames. Fire was found in the ruins six weeks after the burning. But, let us return to our poor sisters. Our good Mother Superior, St. Athanase, not seeing us all at the beginning, suffered an agony of death; fearing that some of us might be buried in the flames, she threw herself on the snow at the feet of the Holy Virgin, and made a vow in honor of her Immaculate Conception. As for me, I attribute to a signal miracle that not one of ourselves or our boarders was injured by a fire so violent, and so sudden! A Huron woman, who is a fervent Christian, not having been awakened as soon as the rest, and finding herself surrounded by the flames, threw herself out of one of the upper windows, and remained as it were lifeless on the bare ice, but she afterwards came to her senses, and it pleased the Lord to restore her

to us. Our little boarders were beside us, in their night-gowns, on the snow, almost dead with cold, and some of them have since been very ill. We had some clothing and other necessaries for our Indian scholars, the fire has robbed us of all, and reduced us like good Job, even to the dunghill, with this difference, however, that all our dear friends, both French and Indians, were moved with extreme compassion, a merciful consolation of which holy Job was deprived. The Reverend Mothers of the Hôtel-Dieu, hearing of our disaster, sent for us to go and stay with them. Your Reverend Fathers conducted us there; on seeing us in so pitiful a state, they shed abundant tears, and clothed us with their grey habits, giving us all they could, with the most admirable cordiality, for, having nothing, we were in want of all things. We spent three

weeks in their house, fifteen persons, as we were, sitting at their table, living like themselves, and performing the same exercises. The day after the fire, the Governor, Mr. d'Aillebout, and your Reverend Father, took us to see these desolate ruins, or rather this vast furnace, which we could not venture to approach, the chimneys having been thrown down, and the walls all cracked. To build on these ruins, appeared a thing impossible, all having been destroyed to the very foundation. Besides this, we had nothing, and all our funds did not seem sufficient to cover the expenses of a new building. Our friends, therefore, thought that we would decide upon returning to France, after these immense losses; but each of us was so strengthened in her vocation, by an extraordinary effect of grace, that not one showed the least desire of

returning to her native country. . . . This adopted land of Canada, furnishes us with abundant employment for the instruction of the young French and Indian girls, and when the people became aware of our resolution to stay, they expressed to us their entire approbation. It is a great consolation for us to witness this affection of the people. I say nothing of your Fathers ; they assisted us to the full extent of their power, sending us the materials of clothing destined for their own use. In a word, they fully proved to us that they possess nothing in this world for themselves alone. This charitable feeling was evinced towards us even by the poor ; one brought us a napkin, the other a chemise, or a mantle, one a hen, the other a few eggs, and all with words of commiseration so very kind that our feelings were deeply moved. You are aware

of the poverty of this country, but the charity of the people is still more remarkable. After three weeks spent with our good Mothers of the Hôtel-Dieu, we were conducted to a little building of our own, erected some time ago, at a few yards' distance from the Convent, by our foundress, and we are now lodging there until the building can be restored : the inconvenience which we endure in this habitation, can only be compared to the extent of our privations. But this is not what grieves me most ; we are greatly in debt, and without one article of furniture for the new building, or any other clothing but that which now covers us, or any provisions for ourselves or our poor Indians."

. . . . .

And now, young ladies of the nineteenth century, nursed in the lap of comfort or affluence, will you not, perhaps, hesitate to give

credit to the touching accounts left to us of the misery endured by these patient sufferers? Ah! no; tradition, our old Convent tradition, is there to confirm them, and we know that Madame de la Peltrie, after that awful fire of the 30th December, 1650, humbled herself, like her divine Lord, during his mortal life, receiving a few eggs from one poor woman, a pair of stockings or a chemise from another, and a loaf of bread from a third! Thus, she and her nuns suffered, during our long Canadian winter, until the spring vessels brought them, at the end of May, their usual supply of provisions and money from France. . . .

To increase their merit, at this trying period, the Almighty permitted that the youngest and most delicate member of the community, should be reduced to the last stage of consumption; yes, one of the severest

trials of Mme. de la Peltrie, was the illness and death of her beloved friend, Rev. Mother St. Joseph de la Troche. In allusion to this event, our annals contain the following passage: "The Monastery having been burnt down, the beds of our nuns were all crowded into one little room, and placed one above the other, like berths on board a vessel or steamer; and the dying sister was placed in one of these. The noise of the Indian girls reciting their lessons, in one end of the room, and the little French girls in the other, was a constant annoyance; besides this, the nuns, being obliged to cook in the open fire-place of the same apartment, it was constantly filled with smoke. The recitation of the divine office, and the singing of psalms, being on the lower flat, every sound was heard above. Then, as the fire had destroyed their shoes, these heroic



sisters had nothing to wear but wooden sandals, and the coarsest kind of galoches, as they were then worn by the poorest peasantry in France, and as they are yet worn by our 'femmes de gros travail,' or washerwomen, who come to work now and again in our 'Lavoir.' Yet, in the midst of privations almost incredible, these true daughters of St. Angela and St. Ursula, were, as the Venerable mother observes, in her own beautiful language, 'comblées de joie,' replenished with joy, to see themselves obliged to receive alms from the poorest of the poor! We cannot with propriety close this chapter, without adding a few words concerning this first blessed sister, who died among us. Mother St. Joseph was the first Ursuline who died in America. Beloved by God and man, she was one of the brightest ornaments of the

order. Gifted with all those graces of nature so highly valued by those of her sex, she also might have enjoyed, amid her high-born friends, a fortune amounting to £12,000 sterling! Owing to this last circumstance, especially, she had the most trying assaults to bear before she could tear herself away from her friends, to conceal her virtues, her talents, and her well-known worth, within the shade of our austere-looking cloister. . . . During her whole life, her fervor was angelic, and she died in the odor of sanctity at the age of thirty-six! What a touching scene her death-bed offered. While all around were weeping, she smiled on them like an angel, and exclaimed: 'How happy am I to die in so poor a place, deprived of all the comforts of France!' . . . 'Que je suis heureuse de mourir en un lieu pauvre, privée de toutes les douceurs de la France!' " . . . . .

Such was the person, whom Mme. de la Peltrie had to part with. It was a painful sacrifice, but the spirit of true humility that reigned in her heart, controlling all its energies, rendered easy to her, the practice of every virtue. The severest trials seemed to lose for her their poignancy, once that she had raised her eyes to Heaven, and exclaimed in the sincerity of her generous feelings, "My God! I deserve this chastisement!" . . . . .

Contrary to the wishes of all, Madame de la Peltrie took to herself, as if by right of foundation, the last place in the chapel, at communion, at table, and in every other place where the community assembled. When spoken of, or addressed by the title of Foundress, she was often observed to sigh deeply, and exclaim: "My God! I am nothing but a poor sinner who has not ceased

offending thee!" Of this she seemed to have a strong, positive conviction, though her conscience was extremely pure, and her life altogether unblemished. Her gait and manners, though naturally dignified, were so modest and unassuming, that her very look inspired the rude Indians with a love of the most amiable of virtues. Madame de la Peltrie never spoke but to humble herself. One New Year's day, according to a custom observed among the Ursulines, the little French and Indian girls having been led by their teachers, to the amiable Foundress, to ask her blessing, she raised her eyes to Heaven, and then looking down upon them all in tears, she exclaimed: "My poor children, do you know to whom you address yourselves? Ah! you come for blessings to the vilest of God's creatures!" . . . . .

Renouncing the various privileges, and exemptions from rule, usually granted by ecclesiastical authority, to the foundress of an institution, she conformed in all things to the rules of the convent, her food, lodging, occupations, hours of rising and retiring to rest, visits within, all was the same as the nuns. So tender was her piety that she would have received holy communion each day of her life, did not her humility make her dread becoming singular, but to atone for this privation, she used to procure for the community the greatest number of masses possible, laying aside the most urgent occupations to go and hear them, and abruptly quitting, at the parlor, persons of the highest distinction, as soon as she heard the mass-bell ring. Her deportment towards the nuns of this community was, in all things, really admirable; she treated them as if they

had all been her superiors, and this deference, so honorable to both parties, appeared chiefly at recreation.

Although she had received the gift of constant prayer, and could speak divinely of the things of God, to persons from without, who came to enjoy her edifying conversation, yet she was so reserved in the community, so far from thinking herself worthy of notice, that she never said a word on spiritual matters, unless it were to answer some direct question proposed. Being one day, particularly pressed to make known some of her feelings towards God, she quickly replied with the simplicity of a child: "What can I say, but that I am constantly offending his divine Majesty!" . . .



## CHAPTER XI.

AUSTERITY AND MORTIFICATION OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE,  
DISPLAYED IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE OF HER LIFE—  
HER RAPID PROGRESS IN PERFECTION—EARTHQUAKE  
AND OTHER TRIALS.

To furnish our young readers with more satisfactory references, concerning the illustrious lady whom we now propose to their imitation, we shall here again introduce a note from the writings of the Venerable Mother who knew so well how to appreciate the virtues of her noble and generous friend.\*

“Madame de la Peltrie, our Foundress, is

\* “Madame notre Fondatrice court à grands pas dans la voie de la sainteté je suis ravie de la voir, et si vous la

making rapid progress in the ways of holiness. I am delighted to see her, and if you could see her, you would be as delighted as I am. We feel much obliged to you for the holy relic you were pleased to send us. This dear lady would not hear to the proposal you made of giving a part of it to the parish church, as you said nothing to her. 'It is for our own chapel,' said she, 'the parish church possesses two entire bodies of saints!' When I heard her speak

voyiez, vous seriez ravi comme nous. Nous vous sommes obligées de la ste. Relique, qu'il vous plût nous envoyer. Nous avons reçu ce précieux dépôt avec des chants d'allégresse. Cette chère Dame n'a pas voulu entendre la proposition que vous me faites d'en donner à la Paroisse, comme vous ne lui en dites rien. C'est pour notre Eglise, dit-elle, la Paroisse a deux corps de saints entiers. Quand je l'entendis parler de la sorte, je gardai le silence. . . . Et, pour vous parler ingénument j'ai été consolée de sa resolution."



thus, I remained silent. . . . And I frankly own to you that her decision was a great consolation to me.”

The spirit of mortification both interior and exterior, was also very remarkable in the life of Madame de la Peltrie, and a person of much stronger constitution could scarcely have endured the rigors which she exercised on her delicate body. During the time of illness, especially, she was inexorable, refusing herself all comfort and relief. Each day of her life in Canada, afforded her new opportunities of suffering, but her trials were, as we have already seen, more severe, at some periods than at others, owing to the unsettled state of the country, and various other local causes. Among these, the earthquakes and the Indian wars hold the most conspicuous place, on account of the terror and distress which accom-

panied them. The earthquake, which spread the greatest desolation throughout the colony, was felt at Quebec for the first time on the 5th of February, 1663. The Venerable Mother gives a full and detailed account of it, and from her writings, we extract the following description. The first alarm of this terrific event, was caused by a low, rumbling, penetrating noise, like that of carriages rolling over the pavement: then the terrified people saw the houses waving backward and forward, like tempest-tossed barks upon a rough sea. After this the bells began to ring, the clocks to strike, and an awful noise was heard on the roofs of the houses, similar to that which is caused by hailstones during a hurricane. Then the extreme agitation of the buildings made the partitions split and the walls crack, while the furniture rolled about in every

direction. The first impression produced by this extraordinary disorder in nature, was truly fearful. The people, in danger of being crushed to death at each repeated shock, pushed out of their houses as if they had been on fire, and as the disorder without was still greater than within, they fled from one place to another in the most extreme terror. The cattle, and wild beasts of the surrounding country, as well as the domestic animals in the city, were howling in the most pitiful manner, and as these shocks were frequently repeated, that whole night offered a scene of inward anguish and terror unequalled in the annals of the colony. The ground, though covered with snow and ice to the depth of five and six feet, burst open in a great many places; the ice being thrown up into the air,—thick clouds of smoke and sulphur issued from

these apertures. The earth thus continued to quake violently, at intervals, during that whole night, so that, between the hours of five in the evening and three in the morning, thirty-two shocks had been felt throughout the extent of this immense country, from the vicinity of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the borders of the great Lakes! . . . . . To finish this distressing picture, we shall here, also insert, a few lines from the fragments of our annals, written from memory after the second fire which destroyed this house on the 20th of October, 1686. "During this time of public calamity, we took our rest on the floor of the community; without undressing, we lay ourselves down on straw beds so as to be ready to fly more quickly, in case the danger should increase. At the moment of the first shock, we were all assembled in the chapel, reciting

matins, and as we stood there, praying, we were all frequently thrown to the ground. At each redoubled shock during the night, we all arose, and recited aloud the fourth penitential psalm, Miserere. . . . Nor did we spare the fasts and other exercises of penance to appease the wrath of our merciful God.

Thus did Mme. de la Peltrie and her nuns devote themselves, like victims, for the sins of the people, and this generosity on their part was felt and appreciated by all ranks of the citizens. Mme. de la Peltrie, in particular, retained nothing for herself, and even when at the point of starvation, she could not take a morsel of food, without dividing it with the ever famishing Indians around her. Writing to a friend in France, the Venerable Mother thus describes the distress to which they were reduced by a shipwreck. "We have again, this

year, suffered considerably by the loss of a vessel, which was wrecked almost in sight of port. All our flour was steeped in the salt water, as well as our other provisions." At another season, she thus gently alludes to the scarcity of provisions. "Would you believe that for about fifty persons, as we are, we have just flour enough to bake three times, and we have no news of the vessels laden with provisions for the country! Yet I cannot help rejoicing in all that it will please God's infinite goodness to ordain! May He be eternally praised! . . . .

When Monseigneur de Laval, the first Bishop of Canada, arrived, in 1659, such was the poverty of the colony, that no suitable dwelling could be found for him. He therefore lodged for some time at the Jesuits' College (the spacious building fronting the French Cathedral, transformed into barracks after the conquest,

and yet occupied by British soldiers). At the end of some months, the Bishop was invited by the nuns, to accept a ward belonging to the poor at the Hôtel Dieu Convent. There, amid the beloved of Christ, the noble son of Montmorency Laval went to reside. Seeing him in a place rather unfavorable to his health, Mme. de la Peltrie, with her usual generosity, offered him her house, then used as the convent school, and to oblige him to accept it, the nuns assembled the children, each day at the community, for their classes. Bishop de Laval, through respect for the cloister ground, enclosed this house with a light paling, and fixed his residence there for the space of two years, during which time he celebrated mass almost every day, in the chapel, which was contiguous as at present. This chapel was a handsome edifice, situated precisely on the spot now occupied by

the antiquated, though venerable old door and parlors. The corner-stone of this building, had been laid by the Governor-General, Mr. de Lauzon, on the 19th of May, 1656. Various losses at that time, prevented the nuns from completing it, by adding the chapel of St. Anne, as had been designed. However, on the 29th of April, 1667, the first stone of this elegant addition was laid by the Governor-General in presence of Mme. de la Peltrie. The Marquis de Tracy, who was her particular friend, insisted on defraying all the expenses himself.

Another trial which greatly increased the sufferings of all, was the frequent recurrence of the most fearful epidemics, which made awful havoc among the Indians and ever found their way into the convent by them. The intense cold of this climate, also rendered their lives one uninterrupted scene of severe suffering and



calm endurance. What must then have been the feelings of this generous lady, who had, as we have seen, the tenderness of a mother's heart, both for the nuns and the children, when despite of all the sacrifices which she had made, she saw them exposed to the most bitter cold, during the long winter months. The use of stoves not being then known in Canada, they had to crowd around the open fire-places without grates, to warm themselves in the course of the day, and were reduced to take their rest at night, in a kind of wooden form or chests, lined with some woollen material. The poor little Indians used to wrap themselves up in skins; but to make our young readers more plainly understand the state of the whole colony, as well as the convent in those days, we shall here introduce a few lines from the Venerable Mother's writings. "Our building is

three stories high, the second flat being occupied by our cells. The chimney which heats the dormitory is at the end, yet so great is the cold, that we cannot stay away from the fire, even for an hour. Between the observances, (prayers, meals, &c.), the place to read, write, study, or work, is, of all necessity, by the fireplace. Our bedsteads are made of wood, and shut up like presses, and although lined with blankets, we can scarcely keep ourselves warm in them. In our four chimneys we burn 175 cords of hard wood!" . . . . Thus for their sufferings in winter; now let us pass in review their trials during one short summer.

The summer of 1660 has been rendered ever memorable in Canada, by the irruptions of the Iroquois Indians, the most barbarous and powerful of our native tribes in the north. Having sworn to exterminate both the Hurons

and the French, they infest the borders of our beautiful lakes and rivers, the whole length and extent of the country, from Niagara to Québec. Concealed in the dark recesses of our noble forests, these faithless infidels lay in ambush, day and night, for whole months together, to surprise and massacre our unwary travellers! . . . . . But in 1660, they could no longer assuage their savage thirst for human blood by so slow a mode of warfare, and all these barbarians united their forces for the general invasion and total destruction of the French settlers, as well as the Huron and Algonquin tribes, who were well-known to be their faithful allies. After repeated acts of the most awful treachery, they took possession of all the advanced posts, spreading terror and desolation to the very gates of our little fort, St. Louis, in Quebec.

This was previous to the heroic sacrifice of Daulac and his brave companions, who, devoting themselves to save their country, went intrepidly to attack these savage hordes, in their stronghold at the "Long sault." Resolved like Spartans of old, to "conquer or to die," they also fell and saved their country. Owing to the state of extreme excitement which preceded this event, the whole population being in constant alarm, Bishop de Laval thought it prudent for the nuns of the Hôtel Dieu, as well as the Ursulines, to go every night, with their pupils to the Jesuits' College.

Accordingly Mme. de la Peltrie, with the children, and the greater part of the community went there, while the Venerable Mother, with three sisters, remained in the convent with the soldiers, who had fortified it and kept constant watch, in case of an attack. This terrible

panic lasted a whole fortnight. A letter of the Venerable Mother, dated June 25th, informs us that, to defend the convent, two detachments of guards had been placed at its extremities, and that a redoubt, in due form, was constructed by the soldiers to protect the barn on one side, and the church on the other. "All our windows were defended by walls breast-high and loop-holes; there were also defences made on our porches." These persons, or little galleries, were situated outside the two large doors, one of which now leads to the interior yard, the other, just opposite the ice-house, leads to "Notre Dame de Grace," the new boarding-school, built in 1853.

"All the avenues leading through the grounds to the monastery, were barricaded, and a dozen large dogs were placed outside, and the guard kept by them, was, with-

out comparison, much better than that of the men, to keep off the Indians, because they fear the French dogs as much as our men, for these animals fly at them when they can catch them and tear them to pieces."\* Thus we see the convent transformed into a little fort, during the summer of 1660, with two detachments of soldiers and their officers living with the Venerable Mother, as also their women and

\* "Toutes nos fenêtres," says she, "étaient garnies de poutreaux et de murailles à moitié avec des meurtrières, l'on a aussi fait des défenses sur nos perrons. Les avenues des cours du Monastère, étaient barricadées, et puis, une douzaine de grands chiens gardaient les portes de dehors, et dont la garde valait mieux, sans comparaison que celle des hommes, car les sauvages craignent autant les chiens français que les hommes eux-mêmes, car ces animaux se jettent sur eux et les déchirent quand ils peuvent les attraper."

children, whose excitement sometimes greatly annoyed her. Yet she bore all with dauntless courage, confiding in the providence of God, whose divine care she sensibly felt, even in that instinct of watchfulness and fidelity which she ever admired in her noble dogs, who were, it seems, as formidable to the Indians, as the fabled Cerberus was, in times of old, to all intruders at Pluto's gate. . . . A little further on she gives, in the same letter, details replete with interest. "I obtained leave to stay in the convent, so as not to leave it entirely deserted. Three of our sisters remained with me, but I must own to you that I was sensibly affected, when I saw them take away from us the most Blessed Sacrament. Sister St. Ursula wept bitterly, and was inconsolable."

On the 8th of the same month, a false alarm had been given, in allusion to which our vene-

rable writer observes: "In less than half an hour each one was ranged at his post. All the doors were again barricaded, and I distributed among our soldiers all that was necessary. The women were greatly alarmed, but as to myself, I assure you, I felt not the slightest fear either interior or exterior. . . .

And yet I did not sleep much during those days of alarm: my ear kept watch during the night, so as to prevent my being taken by surprise, and also to be ready, in case of sudden attack, to give our soldiers all they needed."

Happily all this terror and excitement was not followed by the events which were so fearfully threatening; though detached parties of these cunning and cruel Iroquois, made frequent descents here by day and by night, in despite of the consummate vigilance of the colonists, and the bravery of the gallant



French soldiers. Thus these savages greatly annoyed the settlers, as we see by what happened to the nuns themselves. Alluding to the farm belonging to the convent, situated outside of St. John's Gate, Mother de L'Incarnation says: "There remained in that place but one house, where our laborers used to stay. . . . About 8 o'clock at night, the Iroquois spies appeared at a distance, and called our young man who had care of the cattle. We suppose that they wanted to carry him off, as they had done another young man a few days before. The poor boy was so terrified that he ran to hide himself in the woods. Then, after a little reflection, he came to inform us of what had happened. Immediately all our domestics, to the number of ten, ran off to defend the house, but it was too late; they found it on fire, and the cattle gone."

The next day these ten faithful men, who had risked their lives in defence of our property, were found at a great distance from the farm, all tied to a huge stake of wood, and yet alive, with the exception of one, who had expired from the effect of the deep wounds and gashes with which his body was covered. Two years later, we see the nuns and their saintly foundress, suffering from a still severer trial, the death of the Reverend Wm. Vignal, their kind and good friend, who had served them as chaplain during the space of eleven years. This respected clergyman was induced by the restless and intriguing Abbé de Quélus to leave our nuns, in 1658, and join the Sulpitians in Montreal. In 1662 he was massacred at Pîle de la Pierre, whither he went, with a small party, to collect materials for building. In allusion to these distressing events of 1660—

1652, our Venerable Mother says : " It is really an admirable thing to see the designs of God upon this country. They are altogether above human conception. At the very time that we expected to be all exterminated, those who ventured forth to oppose the Iroquois were taken themselves, and immolated for the whole country."\*

\* " C'est une chose admirable de voir la conduite de Dieu sur ce pays ; elle est tout-à-fait audessus des conceptions humaines. Lorsque nous devons être tous détruits, ceux qui étaient partis pour prendre des Iroquois, ont été pris eux-mêmes, et immolés pour tout le pays."



## CHAPTER XII.

LAST ILLNESS OF MME. DE LA PELTRIE—CONSTERNATION  
AND SORROW WHICH IT PRODUCES IN QUEBEC—HER  
DEATH AND SOLEMN FUNERAL.

SINCE the beginning of our simple narrative we have laid before our young readers, with the utmost fidelity, the chief interesting events of Madame de la Peltrie's life, as well as a few of the trials by which she rendered her pure soul so agreeable to her Creator. We have admired her virtues in the house of

her father ; amid the gay scenes of life in the society of her husband ; in the public exercise of good works during her widowhood ; in the palace of kings, in the Huron hut, and in the solitude of our cloisters. We have found her ever the same ; and of all that is admirable in so beautiful a life, an estimate must be formed by the readers themselves, as we now resume the last events connected with the illness and death of that illustrious lady. Our amiable foundress, having now spent thirty-one years of her life in Canada, in the active practice of every virtue, her angelic soul began to long more ardently than ever, for that eternal enjoyment promised to those who forsake all things here below for the love of Jesus. She had seen this institution, so dear to her heart, rebuilt after the fire, more spacious than before, and flourishing to the entire satisfaction

of the Governor-General, the clergymen, and the whole population. . . . Some fragments of letters, written to the Duchess de Sennesay, and other ladies of high rank in France, plainly attest the great good which was effected by the humble labors of the virtuous foundress and her nuns.

A letter to the Archbishop of Tours, written a few months before Mme. de la Peltrie's death, gives the following details: "As to our community, it is composed of twenty-two nuns; the seminary is filled with French and Indian girls."\* The noble task of this virtuous lady was, therefore, completed, the design of her mission to Canada was fully accomplished; yet, though naturally delicate, her healthy

\* "Pour notre communauté elle est composée de vingt-deux religieuses; le séminaire est remplie de filles françaises et sauvages."

appearance seemed to promise, for many years, the preservation of a life so precious, and so dear to all. It, however, pleased the Almighty to ordain otherwise, for the greater good of his devoted servant. In the year 1652 she had parted with the youngest of her companions; in 1667 she had lost another dear friend, Miss Philippa de Boulogne, sister of Madame d'Aillebont, better known among us by the name of Mère St. Dominique. In 1669, she had closed the eyes of another valued sister, the first devoted person who offered her services to our nuns, in the capacity of sister servant. This was the Sister St. Lawrence of Dieppe, and one sentence will suffice to reveal the virtues with which she was endowed. Her father being a silk-trader (marchand de soie), and all her friends in easy circumstances, when she decided upon enter-

ing the convent, they pressed her to embrace the state of choir-sister, or teacher, for which her natural abilities and fortune seemed to qualify her. To all their solicitations she opposed these few words: "If I had all the Crowns of the universe I would gladly sacrifice them to obtain the place of lay-sister in a house of Ursulines!" . . . . It was now the turn of our beloved foundress to depart, and she was therefore called in the year 1671 to receive the reward of her unblemished and meritorious life. Known and revered throughout the colony for the sanctity of her morals and conversation, her liberality in forwarding every kind of good work, and relieving every species of human misery, Madame de la Peltrie, esteemed and honored by the great and good, was beloved by the poor and humble, and respected by all.



On the 11th of November, 1671, she was seized with a pleurisy, which terminated her life on the seventh day of her illness. The few eventful days that elapsed from the 11th till the 18th, appeared very short to those who dreaded to lose her; but that interval sufficed to exemplify in her death all the heroic and lovely virtues which we admire in the chosen servants of the Lord. Never before had she appeared more humble, more patient, or mortified. Two clauses, which we here extract from her last will and testament, will suffice to exhibit the perfection to which she had attained in the practice of these virtues. After the ordinary preamble, we read as follows:\* “Moreover, the said Lady de la Pel-

\* “Plus, déclare la dite Dame de la Peltrie, que son intention est que son corps soit posé en le lieu où les religieuses du Monastère de St. Joseph de cette ville de Qué-

trie declares that her intention is, that her body shall be laid in the same grave where the nuns of this Monastery of St. Joseph, of the city of Quebec, are interred. She begs of the reverend Ursuline Mothers to grant her this favor, through charity." . . . . How admirable it is to see the noble foundress, begging of her nuns to give her a grave through charity! Her submission to the Superior and attending physicians, during her illness, was like that of a gentle child. Then, also, her piety became more tender, her union with God more expressive, and her resignation to his divine will more entire. Then, she was seen to emulate in holy poverty the anchorites themselves! Desirous of rendering this holy virtue more perfect, she divested

bec, doivent être enterrées. Elle demande aux révérendes Mères Religieuses Ursulines cette charité par aumosne."

herself of the most necessary articles, and even begged of the Venerable Mother to take away from her beside various little refreshments destined for her use. On the seventh day of her illness Madame de la Peltrie, having settled her temporal affairs, gave all her thoughts to heaven, and received the last sacraments of the church ; yet seeing her large family of nuns and children sobbing and weeping around her bed of death, she summoned up all her strength to address them a few words of consolation : “ Tell my friends in France,” said she, “ that I die happy in Canada. Having enjoyed here, among you, the hundredfold promised to those who forsake all things for God, I humbly trust that his Divine Majesty will now give me eternal life, of which this is the pledge.”

Shortly after, while deeply engaged in prayer she raised her eyes towards heaven,

and calmly gave up her pure spirit into the hands of her Creator, on the evening of the 18th of November, 1671. We may easily form an idea of the feelings of the Venerable Mother and the whole community on this occasion. They wept and prayed, they blessed God, and recounted to all, with feelings of unbounded gratitude, the virtues of their beloved benefactress, and for this reason, after a lapse of two centuries, the deeds of this truly Christian lady are enshrined in living temples, each member of her community having received by tradition, as well as by written documents, the most minute and edifying details of her life and death. And how, indeed, could she be forgotten, the tender Mother, who, after sacrificing a large fortune to raise this institution and secure its prosperity, renounced every comfort and satisfaction to dwell with

her nuns and children in the obscurity of the cloister, there practising heroic virtues, unseen by man, but known and appreciated by a just and generous God.

The day of her death was, therefore, one of mourning for all but herself, and it may be truly said that, in her, these words of Scripture were fully realized: "They shall rest from their labors, and their works shall follow them." In pursuance of her last will, the body of Mme. de la Peltrie was opened after her death by the attending physicians, Mr. de Bonamour, Médecin du Roi, and J. B. Gosset, practitioner, of Quebec. Her heart was taken out, and put into a small wooden case without any other covering but quicklime and earth. This was enclosed in another case of lead, which we see at the present day, though all within is reduced to dust, and thus it was de-

livered to the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus, "as a proof of the respect and affection she always had for their holy Society; to be buried under the steps of the altar, where reposes the most holy sacrament; to be there consumed and reduced to ashes at the foot of his Divine Majesty."

She was not buried in the religious habit, in consequence of her extreme humility, which made her declare, that, as she had been unworthy to wear it during her life, she did not deserve that honor after death, and her will was again respected on this point. According to the Ursuline rules, the nuns went in solemn procession to convey the body of their deceased foundress to the choir, on the evening before her burial. As they moved in slow and solemn order, chanting the psalms prescribed, and bearing, amid lighted torches,

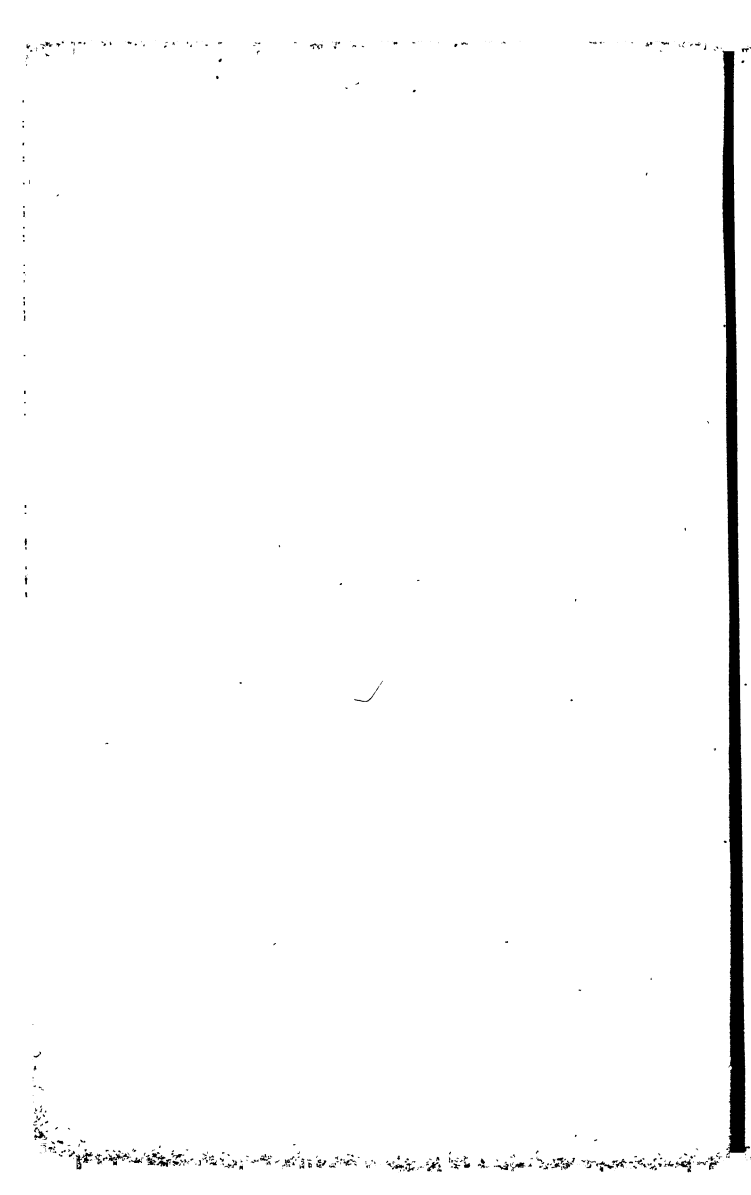
the body of their beloved foundress, who had departed from among them with such evident marks of beatitude, we might have taken them for a fervent band of primitive Christians. Yes, even for those blessed ones who bore silently, amid the shades of eve, to the solitary catacombs, the mortal remains of some generous martyr, who had nobly struggled in defence of our holy faith, and confounded the Prince of Darkness with all his satellites.

The funeral of Madame de la Peltrie was honored by the presence of the Governor-General, Mr. de Courcelle; the Intendant of Justice, Finance, and Laws, Mr. Talon; and every person of distinction in Quebec and the surrounding country. The Indians, also, flocked in great numbers, rending the air with their lamentations, as well as the poor French people, who looked upon her as a ministering

angel sent by Heaven to Canada to be their comfort and support, and it may well be said that the tears shed upon that day, within and without the cloister, were the greatest eulogium of her virtues. After the solemn service, Mr. de Bernières, Vicar-General, and nephew of her valued friend, entered the nuns' chapel, with the rest of the clergy, to perform the rites of burial. These being concluded, they took the case containing the heart of Madame de la Peltrie, to carry it to the church of the Jesuit Fathers. Veiled with black crape, it was borne beneath a canopy by one of the principal citizens of Québec; preceded by the clergy, and followed by the Governor-General, Mr. de Courcelles, and suite, this solemn funeral proceeded to the Jesuits' College. As soon as the procession had reached the chapel door, the valued gift was received by the Re-



verend Father Superior, and immediately deposited in the vault, which had been prepared for its reception, beneath the steps of the grand altar, where it rested in peace for many years. . . . Then, eventful days came on, and changed the face of all things in the colony. . . . At the beginning of the present century, the Jesuits' church having been burnt down, the British authorities completely demolished these interesting ruins, but the Ursuline nuns, desirous to secure the heart of their beloved foundress, caused an excavation to be made, and the precious deposit having been found in the precise place marked in our registers, it was brought back to the Convent, and laid in the same tomb which contained the other remains, as well as those of the saintly Mother St. Joseph and the Venerable Mother de L'Incarnation.



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