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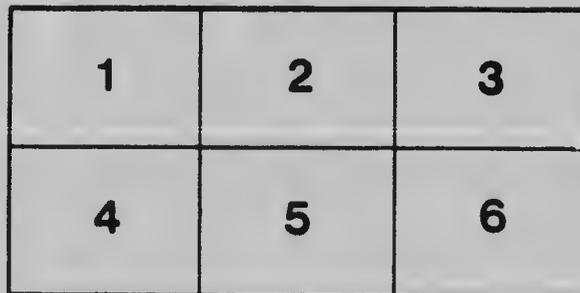
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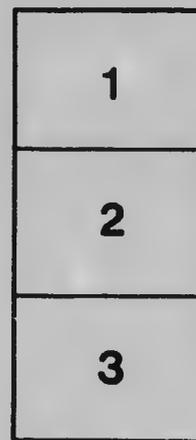
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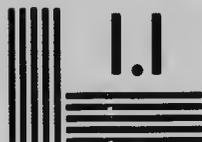
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AUG - 5 1971

THE COLPORTEUR.

Each Society having work in French Canada can obtain statistics from its own Reports.

The Professor with the business man and æsthetic young lady were doing the little French village of Ste. Marie that looked so quaint and huddled and sweet from the steamer deck, but did not smell so sweet as it looked.

The Professor was learned and liberal-minded, the business man was hard-headed, and with a turn for investigation; the æsthetic young lady belonged to a Browning-Wagner club, had spent a month on the continent, and rhapsodized over the dear, sweet, quaint little churches and the grand old cathedrals of the old land.

They wandered through the crooked, climbing streets, the Professor studying archaic forms of life, the business man trying hard to realize that he was still

in Canada, and the æsthetic young lady rapturously recalling the dear little villages of Italy and France. The little bakeshops as big as a dry-goods box ; the general stores selling everything from candles to coffins, from mouth-organs to mouse-traps ; the harness shops, where the big horse collars and cart saddles were displayed ; the shoe shops, where the coarse boots, big and broad, and the "fine" boots, with pinched toes and long, soft tops, the moccasins and red sock boots were to be had ; the little cafe—a tourist necessity—opposite the big stone church ; the little whitewashed houses with green, yellow and blue shutters ; the "tout ensemble," as the æsthetic young lady said, was very picturesque. The business man thought it a backwater sort of place, but the Professor asserted it was a very interesting study.

"The habitant is so picturesque," cried the æsthetic young lady.

"Picturesque !" exclaimed the business man ; "do you know why the habitant is picturesque ? Because he's a relic."

"Yes !" enthusiastically answered the

æsthetic young lady, "that's it, and so interesting, unusual, you know."

"Unusually slow," grumbled the business man. "Why don't this country get a move on? Waterway there," pointing to the great St. Lawrence; "good soil, power," pointing to the rushing stream that foamed under the bridge; "what's the matter with the people?"

The Professor thought it was their easy, pleasure-loving disposition that largely accounted for the lack of progress.

The big stone church the æsthetic young lady thought "perfectly lovely," the tin roof "so quaint," and the little tower and tin steeple "sweetly pretty." She was rather weak in adjectives, but atoned for this by her fervor in expression.

"Big church for a village of this size," said the business man; "how did they ever pay for it?"

"Oh, they are so devout, you know," said the æsthetic young lady.

"But why—" He was stopped by a shocked "Hush!" from the æsthetic young lady.

They had entered the church door, and were standing in the great pillared aisle. The æsthetic young lady was gazing with a far-away, rapt expression toward the altar decked with candles, crosses and tinsel ornaments.

"What's the matter?" said the startled business man. But there was no answer. She had forgotten him.

Just then a quiet-faced little woman in deep black came in with two children. She set her basket down at the door, dipped her finger into the holy water vessel and crossed herself. The little girl did the same, but the little boy stood gazing round open-mouthed, awed by the strange place. The mother whispered to him, seized his hand, dipped it in the holy water, and made the chubby finger sign the cross. Then they passed up the aisle, dropped a courtesy to the altar, and kneeling before a figure of a man on a cross they began to repeat their prayers, the little girl casting covert glances in the direction of the æsthetic young lady, who had a wonderful hat.

The business man had kept his hat on,

but at this point he removed it, while the æsthetic young lady clasped her hands and looked down devoutly. "She was," as she afterwards explained, "inexpressibly touched." The Professor had meantime passed down the aisle, and was examining the various gaudy paintings and ghastly representations of the agony of our Lord.

"Very crude," was his criticism, "but adapted doubtless to the needs of a simple and uncultured people."

"So quaint," murmured the æsthetic young lady.

"Awful!" said the business man, coming as near to a shudder as he could. "I'd hate to have my children pray before these horrors."

"True, true, my dear sir," said the Professor, "but they are suited to the intelligence and rude culture of these people."

"So much the worse for them," grunted the business man, and the æsthetic young lady looked pityingly at him.

After a time the sad-faced little woman with her little crape-decked children had

finished her prayers, and after another courtesy, took her basket and went out again.

"Poor thing," said the business man, with his hand moving toward his trouser-pocket.

"Beautiful!" said the æsthetic young lady. "How lovely that she has this place to come to for consolation."

The business man looked at her inquiringly.

"The church, the atmosphere, the surroundings, you know what I mean," she went on.

But the business man looked quite helpless.

The Professor came to her rescue. "Yes," he said, "I have often thought that the emblematic, the sensuous, the externals, so to speak, of religion might have a larger place in our Protestant religion."

"What! this sort of thing?" said the business man, sweeping his hand toward the walls.

"Well, not exactly, but such as would be suited to the taste and necessities of a cultured and intelligent people."

The æsthetic young lady gazed reverently into his face and murmured, "Oh, yes, how lovely."

The business man again looked helpless, and led the way to the door. To his mind the Professor was "talking rot," and besides, he was hungry. They were making for the big hotel when the æsthetic young lady arrested them with an urgent appeal to have lunch in "this sweet little French cafe." She was sure they would get something nice, and besides, it would be lovely to have an experience.

The business man asserted that the experience he longed for when he was hungry was a good dinner; but she had dark eyes, with a pleading, upward look, and a bewitching way of putting her head on one side, and the business man succumbed. They went in and found a beautifully clean room, with table all newly laid, fresh and neat and inviting. At the table sat a young man having bouillon. He was evidently a Frenchman; his face was pitted with smallpox, but was redeemed from ugliness by a fine pair of eyes that looked out honestly at you. As

the party approached he rose from the table and bowed low.

“Bon jour, mademoiselle ; bon jour, messieurs.”

They returned his bow, the æsthetic young lady smiling sweetly upon him, and confiding to the business man that she loved the habitants, especially when pock-marked, they were so picturesque.

“Picturesque !” exclaimed the business man ; “I prefer them plain. They ought to stamp out the beastly disease. How would you like the adornment yourself ?” he added.

“Oh, that is quite another thing.”

“Quite !” replied the business man with emphasis.

“But it does not spoil this young man a bit,” insisted the æsthetic young lady.

The young man bowed low, and in excellent English remarked, “I am charmed with the evident sincerity of madam-oiselle.”

The æsthetic young lady, in distressed confusion, apologized profusely.

“It is not at all important,” answered the young man.

The Professor looked him over with interest.

"You live here?"

"For the present."

"You are in business?"

"Yes," pointing to the black haversack on the floor and smiling, "I am a pedlar."

"How nice," cooed the æsthetic young lady, "you must have delightful experiences with the habitants."

"Sometimes," said the young man, with a peculiar smile, "and sometimes they throw chairs and things at me."

"What's that for?" demanded the business man.

"Because I tell them the truth."

The Professor grew suspicious. "You are a Colporteur, I suppose," he said. The tone meant, "You are a low-down, mean, back-door preacher."

"Yes," said the young man, sitting up straight, "I am a Colporteur."

"What's that?" said the æsthetic young lady.

"I carry about, sell, and give away Bibles, Testaments and religious tracts."

"Oh, is that all." Her interest in him

began to wane. "But why should they throw things at you?"

"Because they are told that the Bible is a dangerous book, and will be their destruction."

"Only the very ignorant, I presume," said the Professor loftily.

"They are constantly told so by their priests," said the young man.

"Yes, yes!" said the Professor, waving his hand, "we have often heard that, but the Pope's recent letter settled that question. The people are allowed to have Bibles, and the priests are instructed to teach them the Bible truth."

"That is strange, indeed," said the young man; "what bad Catholics they must be in this village, the priest worst of all."

"Bad Catholics!" exclaimed the æsthetic young lady, "surely they are most devout."

"Yet, strange to say, they regard not the Pope's letter. They do not teach the people to read. They do not give them Bibles at all. It is very strange."

"What do you mean?" asked the Professor.

"You come with me," said the young man warmly, "there are one hundred and seventeen families in this village. Last summer I sold thirty Bibles and Testaments, and distributed more than a thousand tracts. To-day there are not ten Bible in the village."

"How's that?" said the business man.

"The priest visited every home and demanded the Bibles left by the 'wolf heretic,' and every Bible given up was burnt in the stove."

"What about the ten left?" continued the business man.

"Most of the poor people denied having them, and a few told the priest they had paid for them and were going to read them in spite of him."

"That is, they lied to and defied their priest," said the Professor severely.

The young man was silent.

"Now my dear sir," continued the Professor, kindly, "I think you must see that you are engaged in a work that is unworthy of any Christian church. What is your church?"

"Presbyterian!" said the young man.

"Ah, that is my own, but I hope I can worship in any communion and find good in all Christian churches. Where were you educated?"

"Pointe aux Trembles and Montreal."

"Ah, that I fear accounts for it," said the Professor sadly. "Don't you see how unworthy it is to be attacking a great, historic, venerable Christian church?"

"And the dear old priests, you know," put in the æsthetic young lady, "and the sweet nuns."

Then the young man began to grow excited and to break his English.

"It is a great church, it is a venerable church, it is a historic church, and it is, too, a Christian church, but it is not good for me, it is not good for my people. It is not enough to be great, to be venerable—so is the devil." The æsthetic young lady looked much shocked. "It is not enough to be historique, Buddhism is the same."

"But, sir, it is a Christian church," said the Professor warmly.

"Yes, it is a Christian church, but it is a corrupt church. It does not teach the true."

“The same God and Father, the same Saviour of all, the essentials are the same,” said the Professor, regaining his calmness. But the young man was on his native heath.

“Yes, God the Father, Jesus, but not Jesus the only Saviour, Marie, the Saints, the Apostles, the relics. There is not one Saviour, but many, and the top of all the Virgin Marie. The poor people cannot come to God, the good Father, they must get the Virgin Marie. They cannot speak to the good Jesus, they must go to the Virgin Marie. The Virgin Marie, the Virgin Marie, everywhere the Virgin Marie! The Queen of Heaven! the mother of God! the great power on heaven and earth! No! it is not a good church.”

“But, my dear sir, after all, they have the essentials of true religion,” expostulated the Professor.

“I know, I know! the Apostle’s creed! the great hymns! the good fathers! I know all that. But the poor people know not God their Father, Jesus Christ their Saviour, and they cannot get peace here,” smiting his breast.

The æsthetic young lady was finding him interesting again. He was beginning to look picturesque.

"But they all look so happy and contented and—and so devout," she answered sweetly.

"I'm sure that woman we saw in the church this morning looked so," turning to the business man.

"Devout, yes, but not particularly happy. I should say," said the business man.

"What was she like?" said the young man. The æsthetic young lady described her eagerly.

The young man's face grew grave.

"Happy? No! Content? No! Her husband died a month ago. A Catholic, but he would read the Bible. The priest tells her he is in Purgatory, and is in agony to get out. She has paid all she can. Still he is not out. She must sell her cow. She will then have enough to get him out, but her living will be gone."

The business man made a remark to himself. It would not print, and the æsthetic young lady looked at him with a pained expression.

"But surely that is a very unusual case," said the Professor.

"Unusual!" said the young man, shortly, "No!"

"Still," pursued the Professor, "it is a great church, and seems to meet the needs of the people, and it is a pity to disturb their faith."

"Pity to disturb them! pity to teach them the truth! to free them from error and darkness! What of John Knox, Luther, Calvin, were they all a mistake?"

The young man was quite hot.

"But see here," said the business man, "it don't hurt them. They are good, quiet citizens, industrious and contented. Will you make them any better by making them Protestants?"

"We don't make them Protestants. We give them the Bible and teach them to read it. We want to give them the light, the good Gospel that you have, that your children have," said the young man.

"But, after all, they are good, respectable, peaceable citizens. Look at it in a business-like way."

"Yes," cried the young man, "just that way. Come with me," and he pull-

ed him to the window and pointed to the long, sloping hillside. "Do you see these little fields, these little houses. Every field is a farm, every house a home of six, ten; twelve children. They can divide their fields no more. Their children must go out to the towns, to the factories in Vermont and Massachusetts, to the small shops, to the shanties. They will be servants all their lives. Why? they cannot read nor write. There are one million five hundred thousand French-Canadians. Do you know that seven hundred thousand cannot read and write. What chance has the French-Canadian boy? Why has he no schools? The great Roman Catholic church. They cannot go away to school. Why? They are too poor. Why so poor? The great Roman Catholic church. Look dere," he was lapsing badly now, "you see dat church. Tirty tousan' dollars! Who paid it? The poor people for the last twenty years. Twenty farms within ten miles were mortgaged to pay that fine church."

"Yes, they are content, because they have lost their hope; they have no am-

bition or they are too ignorant. If they make money, the more for the priest."

"But, why do they pay?" asked the business man. "That's their own business."

"They *must* pay," said the young man.

"How?"

"Why, they must pay their taxes. They pay taxes on their land to the church."

"Do you mean the church levies the taxes?"

"Why, certainly. What else?"

"What else? The State, of course."

"The State, that is the church."

The business man made another remark to himself and then said: "Look here, Professor, that's pretty tough, eh?"

"Yes, but that is all changing," said the Professor lifting his eyebrows, "modern ideas are making way."

"Changing? Yes, slowly enough," said the young man, "but still changing, but why? Did the great Roman Catholic church introduce these reforms? Not one!"

"Who did?" asked the business man.

"The light came from many sides. Letters from friends in the United States who have had a taste of life free from the priest's rule; the young men from the cities who have seen and learned come back home and tell how Protestant young men are educated and are beating them, the politicians are talking of free education, and free voting, of keeping the priest in the church, and, most of all, and more than all, altogether, the Colporteur."

The tone of quiet pride in which the young man said "the Colporteur" struck the business man with some force.

"What? How many are there of you?"

"Thirteen."

"Thirteen among one million five hundred thousand!" said the business man in astonishment. "You must spread yourselves pretty thin."

"The Colporteur has been here for twenty years. The Colporteur is the pioneer, the advance guard, the sapper and miner. Before the evangelist, before

the mission school, before the church goes the Colporteur."

He might have been speaking of Remington's scouts from the pride in his voice.

"What do you do? How do you work it?" asked the business man.

"We come to the door of the house. We ask to come in. We show our books, our pictures and papers. We talk with the people. Sometimes they are cross and push us out, but often they are glad and talk and talk. We come back in a week. The neighbors come in. We talk and they ask questions and then we tell them of Jesus and a free pardon without price. Ah! that is new to them! No pay for absolution, no pay for peace! And then the next week the priest comes and burns the books and curses 'the wolf.' But he cannot burn the new thoughts, the new hunger here," striking his breast, "and we come again and they run to meet us and so the light comes."

"But only thirteen?" asked the business man again.

"That is all," said the young man sadly, "but we sold and gave away nearly one thousand seven hundred copies of the Bible and over thirty-two thousand religious papers."

"But don't you get hurt sometimes?" said the æsthetic young lady who was interested in the young man in spite of his work.

"Oh, yes," he added cheerfully, "that is nothing, but," he added with grave face, "it is hard for our people."

"Hard, how?" asked the æsthetic young lady.

"It is hard to leave your father, your mother, your home. It is hard to see the face you love black with hate of you."

"Why! do they hate their own children?"

"Do you see that little white house far up beyond the trees there? Well, two years ago a boy heard a missionary; he went to school at Pointe aux Trembles; he saw the light. He wrote home; his father said, "You must come home no more, you must write

no more ; you are dead." He did not go home again; he wrote and wrote to his brothers and sisters. One by one they saw the light. The father was in a rage. The priest tried to win them back. They could not deny the light. One girl took sick. The neighbors, the friends, the father and the priest surrounded her bed. They pray, they threaten, they vex her day by day to come back, come back. But she sees Jesus her Saviour, and He says, 'Come on, come on,' and so she cannot go back, and one day she goes to Him. That day the father sent all the others away. He would have no heretics in his house. They all left home and friends and are making their own living among strange people. That is hard."

The young man's eyes were shining, the aesthetic young lady was finding him even more interesting, but the Professor snorted in a manner quite unphilosophic.

"Sheer nonsense! Why don't you leave these people alone?"

Then the young man forgot himself and his face blazed.

"Shame!" he said. "Leave them alone! Leave them alone! No! they are seeing the light and they cry for more, and the light is there," pointing to his black bag, "and I shall give all I can. I cannot leave them alone."

"It is absurd to think of trying to convert French Canada," said the Professor almost angrily.

"So they said to the monk Luther. One against the great Roman Catholic church. But light will shine. Here a light, over the hill in the next parish a light, a row of lights along the St. Lawrence, up the Ottawa. Little congregations nearly one hundred, over one thousand members, twenty-five mission schools, nearly nine hundred children besides the grand Pointe aux Trembles, nearly two hundred boys and girls there. Yes, light is coming sure."

"Isn't he just lovely?" murmured the aesthetic young lady to the business man.

But the business man was figuring things out.

"Who pays for all this?"

"A little from the French-Canadian Protestants, seven thousands dollars may be, the rest," he added with a smile, "you do."

"Not much," said the business man. "But look here, what does the whole thing cost?"

"Don't know," said the young man with a shrug, and a Frenchman's indifference to finance.

"Do you, Professor?" persisted the business man.

"Yes, I do," said the Professor, still inclined to wrath, "nearly forty thousand dollars. A great waste of money."

"Hold on a minute," said the business man, "if this young fellow is right, it's a serious business for Canada. A million and a half Canadians kept in ignorance, kept poor paying taxes, bullied by their priests, kept from their rights as citizens. Is that true, do you think?"

"Oh, nonsense! much exaggerated," said the Professor.

"I give you facts," said the young man firmly, "seven hundred thousand of our

people cannot read and write. The Educational Bill last session was defeated. Why? It said school trustees must be able to write. You cannot get enough trustees said the Opposition in the Council, and the Bill was thrown out. You go into our schools under the priests. They know the catechism, the *Devoir du Chretien*, but nothing else till they are twelve or fourteen. Then they leave school in disgust, they are condemned to be servants of others, in factories, shops, shanties, all their lives. They have no chance."

"I believe," said the Professor, as if settling the question, "in allowing the French people to hold their own faith in their own way. Let the Roman Catholic Church keep Quebec, I say."

"Why?" said the young man.

"It belongs to them," answered the Professor; "they were here first, and they have the right of possession."

"Ah," said the young man, politely, "do you know that at first French Canada was more Huguenot than Catholic. Do

you know that up to 1627 the Huguenots were leading in the army, in the state, in the business of the country ? and that if the Jesuits had not come in 1625 the Protestant religion would have been firmly planted in the new colony. And even in 1759, when Quebec was taken, there were four hundred Protestants in the city besides those in the army."

"Why, I thought all these old fellows, Champlain and the rest, were bigoted Roman Catholics," said the business man, rubbing up his Canadian history.

"Champlain, yes!" replied the young man, but Cauvin and his Tadousac colony were Huguenots. De Monts and his settlers at Port Royal and afterwards at Quebec were Huguenots. The two De Cæns were strong fighting Huguenots."

The Professor was evidently unprepared for this view.

"So the Jesuits rather did the Protestants up?" said the business man.

"Yes," went on the young man, "and those Highland regiments of Scotch Presbyterians, Fraser's and Montgomery's regiments, who were given land grants along the St. Lawrence, where are they?"

In the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church."

"How? the Jesuits again?" asked the business man.

"No," said the young man, "they could resist the Jesuits, but," with a bow to the æsthetic young lady, "not the French Catholic young ladies who stormed their hearts."

"How lovely," sighed the æsthetic young lady.

The young man looked at her in dismay.

"But," pursued the business man, "are you making any headway?"

"Oh, it is slow," said the young man, "our converts are forced to leave their homes; twenty thousand have left. The priests are very bitter, many Protestants are afraid to help, it will hurt their business."

"How about the schools? Where do you get teachers?" inquired the business man who looked at things from a practical standpoint.

The young man brightened up.

"The schools are grand, the teachers

are trained at Pointe aux Trembles, and we have nearly one thousand children."

"The Pointe aux Trembles is a kind of High School, I suppose," pursued the business man.

"They educate for the University, for teachers, ministers and business."

"Ministers!" said the business man, who was Scotch, and had a high educational idea for the ministry.

"Not completely, you see," said the young man, "but in part. Why!" he went on enthusiastically, "there are over five thousand graduates of our school in law, in medicine, in business all over this continent. Ministers over one hundred and sixty. A Professor in the United States, one in McGill, and one in the Winnipeg College."

"I know him," said the Professor warmly, "a good man!"

"Ah! good!" said the young man, glad to agree with him for once.

As they were leaving the cafe the young man said hesitatingly, "If you would like, we have a small meeting to-night."

"Oh, habitants?" exclaimed the æsthetic young lady.

“Yes,” smiled the young man, “we are all habitants.”

The Professor had an engagement. The business man didn't know, but the æsthetic young lady accepted for both.

“I'll bring him,” she cried, and she did.

The meeting was held in a little room back of the shoe shop. About fifteen were present, an old venerable looking man with long white moustache, two young farmers, three boys, and the rest women. It was all in French, and the business man frankly gave up trying to understand, but the æsthetic young lady tried to look intelligent, as if she were following closely. A few beautiful French hymns, then a chapter was read and explained. But the meeting was chiefly one of testimony .

First the shoemaker told his story, interpreted by the young man.

“I had no peace in my heart. At the retreat the preacher said ‘St. Joseph is the great saint, you must pray to St. Joseph.’ For weeks for months, I pray to St. Joseph, but I have no peace. The cure preached a big sermon. He told us to go

to the Blessed Virgin, and again I pray with all my heart, day and night. But I have no peace. I heard the Colporteur. I read the good book. I hear about the free gift. I come. I am full of peace. I laugh and sing to God."

The tears were streaming down his cheeks. The business man understood that language, if the French was too much for him.

Then another and another. Last of all the old gentleman rose.

"I came to St. Cyprien two years ago. I had lost faith in my church. It was all dark. The Colporteur gave me a Bible. I read it. I found it a good book, but I was too proud. I would not become a slave again to any church. For a long time I read and study. By and by I talk with the priest. He says, 'You must come to confess and pray to the Blessed Virgin.' I say, 'That is not said in this book.' I talk to the Colporteur. He ask me to pray to Jesus, the only Saviour. He prays for me then. By and by the light come. I find the Pearl of Great Price. I am full of joy. I want to tell every one about the great gift."

The fine grace of manner, the dignity, the simple joy with which the old gentleman told his story made the æsthetic young lady forget for the moment that he was a "picturesque habitant."

Before the close the young man told them of the poor woman who was going to sell her cow. They agreed to help her, and then and there made their small offering. This part the business man could understand.

"What is this for?" he asked of the young man.

"To save the cow," he answered simply.

The business man returned the fifty-cent piece to his pocket.

"Here," he said, "I hate to throw good money away, but I don't want that cow to go to purgatory."

And the æsthetic young lady smiled at him with her head on one side, and said softly, "How sweet of you!"

A twenty-dollar bill.

And if you look at the list of Pointe aux Trembles scholarships, you will see this entry, "Toronto, Ont., a Friend." That's the man.

