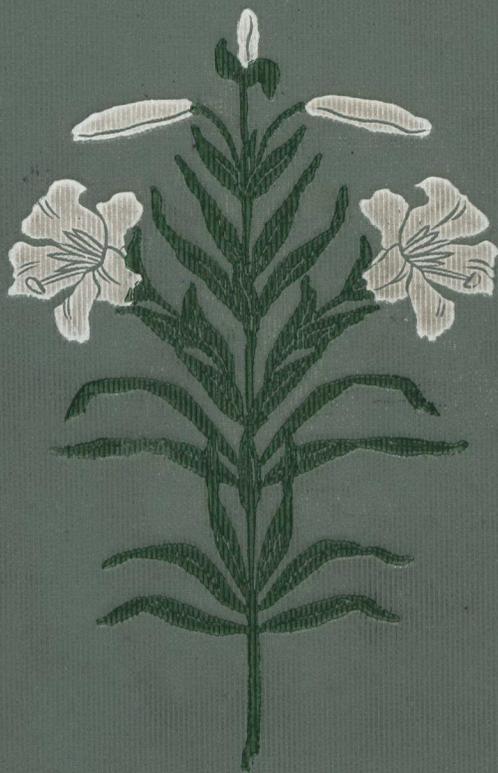
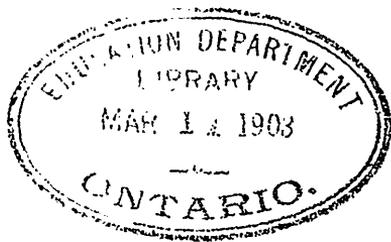


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*Maids & Matrons*  
of  
NEW FRANCE



Mary Sifton Pepper



Maids & Matrons of New France



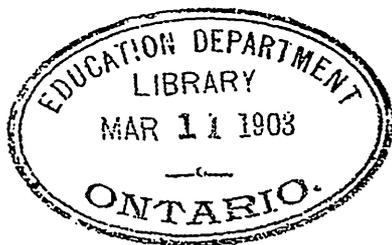
*Madame de la Peltrie.*

# Maids & Matrons of New France

*By*

MARY SIFTON PEPPER

*Illustrated*



Toronto  
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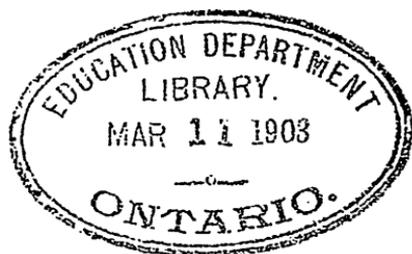
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To

THE MEMORY OF

*MY MOTHER*

CHRISTINE LINDSAY PEPPER





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# *Maids and Matrons of New France*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE nineteen pioneer women who disembarked on the shores of Massachusetts in 1620 have been celebrated ever since in romance and poetry. Twelve years earlier a banner bearing the lilies of France was planted on the headlands of Quebec. The colony thus inaugurated was increased from time to time by the emigration of small groups of women from the mother country. These few heroic souls, the pioneer women of Canada, played as important a part in its growth, and are as worthy of eternal remembrance, as their Anglo-Saxon sisters of New England. Yet, with few ex-

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

ceptions, they have waited in vain for a poet to tell in immortal verse their heroic deeds, or an historian to perpetuate their fame.

The history of many of these women of the Canadian wilderness never will be known, for it is buried under the soil moistened by their sweat and tears. One of the intrepid sisterhood, Jeanne Mance, has been commemorated by a part of a monument in Montreal; an island resort in the St. Lawrence recalls by its name the brief sojourn of Helen de Champlain on these shores; the annals of a few others have been written by graphic historians; but monuments and histories have done little toward making their names known beyond the confines of the land where they labored and died.

They were few in number: one patient housewife eking out a frugal existence on the rock of Quebec; two or three gentlewomen, who, with a sublime but misplaced confidence in the docility of the savages, un-

## *Introduction*

dertook to teach and civilize them; some who attempted to introduce the corruption and gayety of the French court into this primitive civilization; representatives of religious sisterhoods whom the most appalling difficulties could not discourage; and, at last, after nearly a century of failure had opened the eyes of the colonization companies of the Old World, young women who were sent over by the shipful to become the matrons of New France. If the order had been reversed, New France might still be vying with her neighbor, New England, in prosperity and progress.

A comparison between these two companies of pioneer women, the Canadian gentlewomen and the Pilgrim mothers, would result in no discredit to the former. Although the Frenchwomen were dominated by strange superstitions and frequently inspired by supernatural visions, they never became slaves to witchcraft, as

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

did their New England contemporaries. Many of them would even nowadays be looked upon as "emancipated" and "advanced." Yet it was nearly three centuries ago that Judith de Bresoles renounced the luxury of a wealthy and aristocratic home and devoted seven years to the study of chemistry and medicine, that she might become physician and nurse to the savages of the New World; that Marguerite de Roberval, descendant of a long line of cavaliers and noble dames, wandered alone through the haunted wastes of Demon's Isle, and kept at bay the wild beasts of the wilderness with her old French harquebus; that Marie Guyard, with her few brave assistants, delicately nurtured and high-born women of France, made of themselves, in turn, mechanics, architects, and farmers in their adopted land; that those dainty nurses, the hospitalières of Quebec, dyed their cherished white gowns a dull brown that they

## *Introduction*

might follow their profession more efficiently amid the smoke and uncleanness of the squalid wigwams. "Who now will hesitate to cross over the seas," exclaims a poor missionary, at sight of these courageous gentlewomen, "since delicate young ladies, naturally timid, set at naught the vast expanse of ocean? They, who are afraid of a few flakes of snow in France, are ready to face whole acres of it here!"

The coming of these women to the New World was in great part due to the urgent cries for woman's help sent over the sea by these missionaries, who put forth many inducements for their emigration, among others, the great salubrity of the Canadian climate. One of them writes that the air of New France is healthful for the body as well as for the soul, while another declares that although the cold is very wholesome for both sexes, it is especially so for women, who are almost immortal in Canada.

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

Marc Lescarbot, a society wit of Paris, returned to France from the ruined Acadian colony of 1607 and wrote a learned treatise on the conditions necessary to the making of permanent settlements in New France, among others urging the need of women there. If there had been some good village housewife to look after the cows transported thither with such a vast deal of trouble, they would not have died and left him and his companions without fresh milk and butter. He finished his dissertation on this subject by berating soundly that wiseacre of old who had said that women were an evil, though a necessary one, for men could not get along without them.

But this open flattery of Lescarbot, as well as the earnest appeals of Champlain and the missionaries, met with only indifferent success during the first half-century of the colonization of New France, as will be seen in the course of this narrative. The

## *Introduction*

women who came at last may be historically associated with four important periods in the making of Canada: the first attempts at colonization in Acadia, beginning in 1604; Quebec's early struggles to gain a foothold between 1608 and 1660; the founding of Montreal in 1642; and the advent of the Carignan regiment into Canada in 1665.

FIRST PERIOD  
*PIONEER WOMEN OF ACADIA*

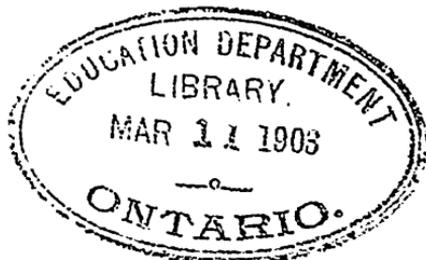
I

MARGUERITE DE ROBERVAL,  
THE HEROINE OF THE ISLE OF DEMONS

**M**ANY thrilling stories are related of the making of these French colonies in the New World, in which brave men met their fate, and others survived almost incredible hardships and perils. A few modern historians, referring to this period, have spoken briefly of the adventures of an unhappy woman, Marguerite de Roberval, on the Isle of Demons. They owe the story to a quaint old cosmographer, André Thevet, who relates it with many picturesque additions. Here it is as gathered from his account: —

## *Marguerite de Roberval*

One beautiful spring day in the year 1542 a haughty viceroy's ship was pursuing its way across the Atlantic. Suddenly it stopped opposite a lonely island. The viceroy had just been informed of a guilty intrigue between his niece, Marguerite, and a young cavalier of his company, abetted by the old nurse, Bastienne. His punishment was swift and terrible. A boat containing the two women, a few stores, and four French harquebuses, was lowered and pushed away. The lover jumped overboard, swam diligently in its wake, and reached the shore of the island at the same time as the occupants of the boat. Then the three exiles, turning their faces toward the sea, saw with agonized hearts the forbidding hulk of the viceroy's ship, relentless as its master, move off and leave them to their fate. On to the shores of Newfoundland the viceroy, the great Sieur de Roberval, pursued his way, there to meet the master

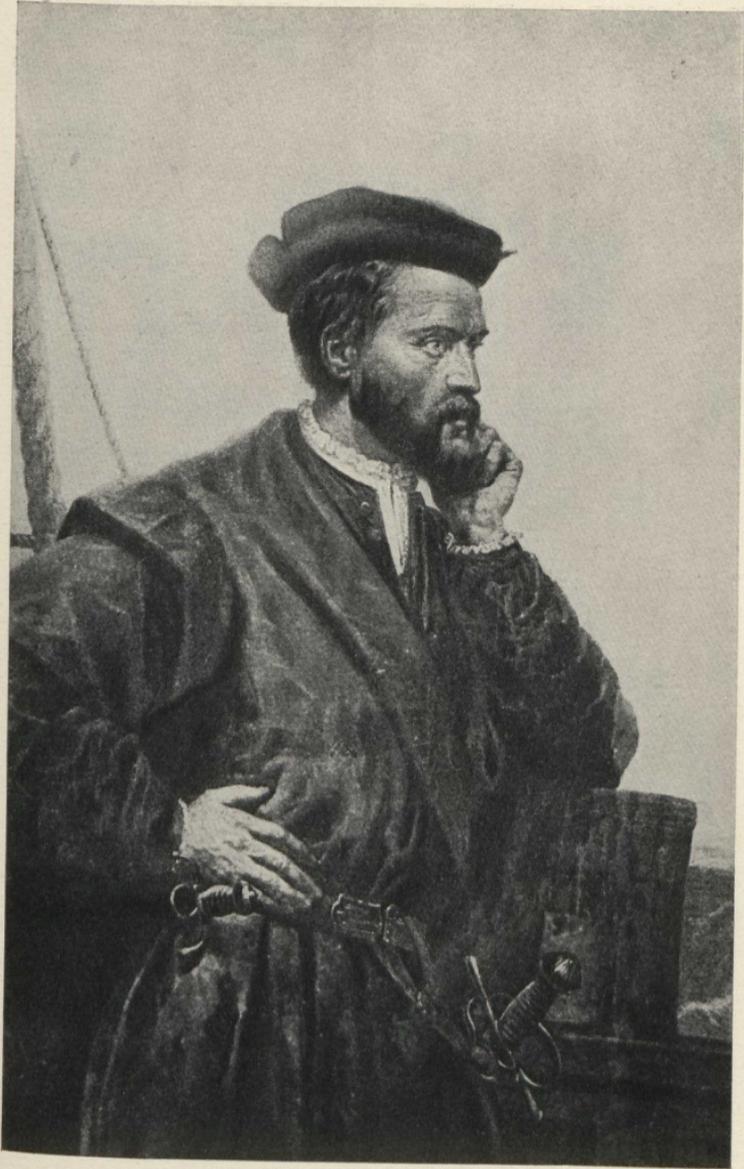


## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

pilot of the age, Jacques Cartier, and with him to found a colony which would perpetuate the name of France in the New World.

But Cartier met Roberval and his company before they had reached the appointed place, for he was on his way back to France. The old chronicler says that "he enformed the Generall that he could not, with his small company, withstand the savages, which went about daily to annoy him, and that this was the cause of his return into France." Thus deserted, Roberval's attempts at settlement proved disastrous failures; the scurvy, cold, and starvation proved to be insurmountable barriers to the execution of his plans. His whole company soon found themselves in such a condition of misery that they became mutinous, and to keep them in order he resorted to the most extreme penalties, hanging, imprisoning, and whipping "as well women as men, by which means they lived in quiet." The following year

*Jacques Cartier*



## *Marguerite de Roberval*

they again turned their prows toward their native land and sailed past the Isle of Demons, heedless of the fate of the hapless exiles they had left there.

In the maps made soon after this voyage, which even now may be seen in the great National Library at Paris, it was designated "The Maiden's Isle," owing to Marguerite de Roberval's banishment there. She had seen a representation of the place in an old chart which hung upon the walls of the château in Picardy where she had lived with her uncle. Devils, with horns, wings, and tails, stalked about, and flew like bats through the air; horrible monsters floated in the surrounding waters, and the savages in their canoes hurried wildly to the opposite shores. Basque and Maloine fishermen, who haunted these regions in search of the precious cod-fish for the Lenten season in France, had heard strange sounds there, — wailing voices, groans, fiendish shouts, and bacchanalian

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

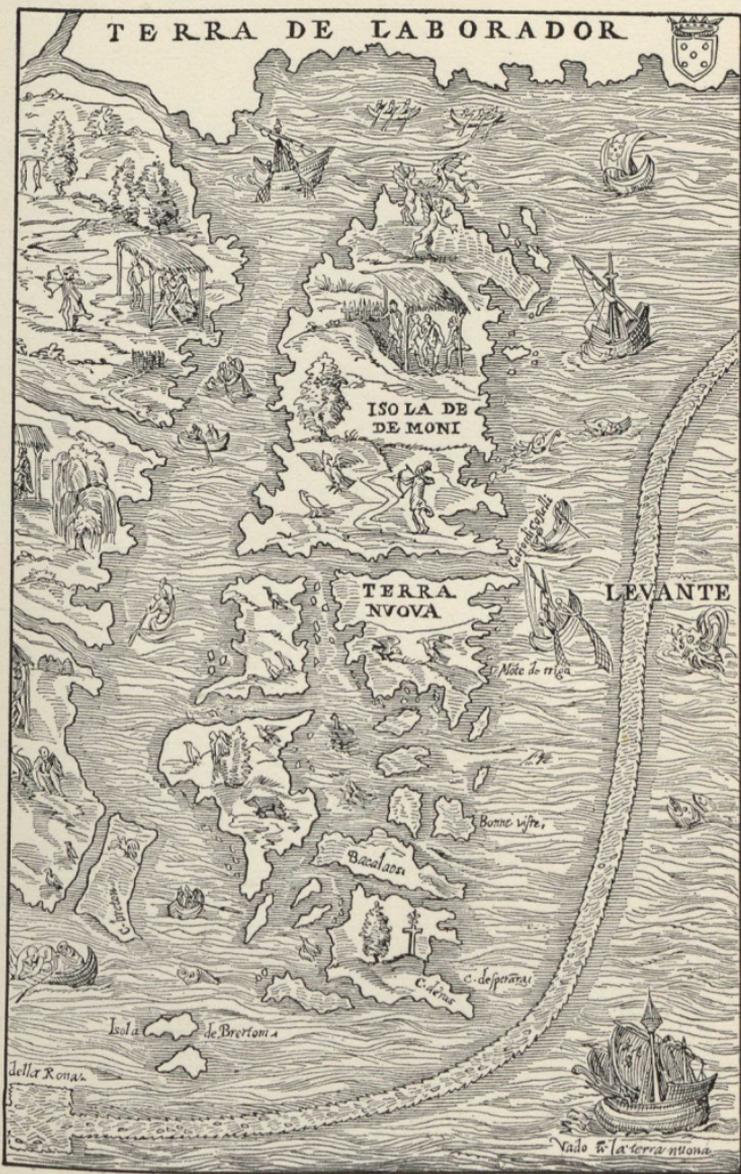
revels, — which caused them to cross themselves and flee in terror. Many a time Marguerite had stood fascinated before this picture, and had lifted up her heart in thankfulness to the Virgin that the great ocean lay between her and this haunted spot.

Yet it was here that she and her lover, with no priest to consecrate their union, established their home, the first in Canada. The group of three was soon augmented by the advent of a child, and the miniature settlement bade fair to become a factor in the growth of a great colony. But after a few months death left Marguerite alone to battle with her fate. She hollowed out with her own hands the graves of husband, child, and nurse, and then began a struggle for life.

Clad in shaggy bearskins, her gun over her shoulder, this "female Robinson Crusoe" trod the dreary wastes of her island home, wandering here and there in search of game,

*Isle of Demons*

TERRA DE LABORADOR



### *Marguerite de Roberval*

or looking longingly for the outlines of some friendly sail against the dim horizon. At night, in agonies of fear, she barricaded the door to keep out the bears that roamed about her cabin, or, worse still, the shrieking demons that she thought she saw looking in at her through the chinks in the wall. Her sole protectors were her guns, and these she used to frighten away the evil spirits in the air, or to kill the beasts of prey. Three of the bears brought down by her harquebus are said to have been "as white as an egg."

Once she saw far out at sea a canoe of Indians who seemed to be coming towards the island. But their painted faces, ridges of bristling hair, and gleaming tomahawks filled her with greater terror than the demons themselves, and she fled shrieking to her cabin. They, too, turned quickly back, for they saw in this strange creature the wife of the Manitou, the source of all their ills.

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

She succeeded, after weeks of labor, in constructing a canoe like those she had seen pictured in the old charts. In this she determined to venture forth in search of the mainland, for she had lost all hope of ever being rescued by any of her countrymen. A trial trip was made in it, but after a few rods of perilous navigation, the canoe, lacking the nicety of proportion so well known to the Indians, overturned, and its occupant was thrown into the sea. She swam safely to the shore, but the canoe floated off into the distance, telling no story to any chance fisherman that might see it but that of a drowned savage.

Two years passed, and Marguerite continued to live in her island home, contending with enemies alike in earth, air, and forest, and frequently driven to the extremity of biting off the ends of fresh young twigs for food. But one October day some Maloine fishermen were setting forth from the New-

## *Marguerite de Roberval*

foundland Banks on their homeward voyage. Gazing out to sea, one of them saw smoke curling up from the shores of the haunted island. Straining their eyes, they could discern the figure of a woman clad in ragged skins. She was beckoning them to come on. They hesitated, for the stories they had heard of these evil spirits recurred to their minds. This might be one luring them on to destruction. Then suddenly an old sailor recalled the story of Roberval's niece. Pity and curiosity conquered their fear, and they hastened to the island and disembarked.

The fur-clad, haggard woman proved in truth to be the beautiful Marguerite de Roberval who had been banished there. When she heard her native tongue spoken once more and realized that her rescuers had come at last, and that her lonely vigil was at an end forever, she sank upon the ground and with tears of joy lifted up her

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

heart in thanksgiving to God. Without delay the fishermen, listening to her strange story with pity and amazement, made a place for her in their rude craft and all embarked on the homeward journey. As the dark outlines of the Isle of Demons disappeared from view, Marguerite's spirits rose, and, again the happy, light-hearted French girl, she poured into the ears of these rude but sympathetic listeners the harrowing tale of her bereavements, adventures, and sufferings.

Arrived in France, her troubles were not yet over. After an exile of two years and five months, she found herself still pursued by the wrath of her relentless uncle, and was obliged to hide herself in a little village of Périgord. He & she remained for several years, when, on a second expedition to the New World, Roberval and all his crew perished, or at least were never heard from again. Let us hope that some auspi-

*Marguerite de Roberval*

cious breeze blew him out of his course and landed him on the Isle of Demons, there to taste indefinitely the delights to which he had so cheerfully consigned his niece. When year after year passed and he did not return, she came forth from her hiding-place and lived happily to a good old age.

## II

### THE MARCHIONESS DE GUERCHEVILLE

FIRST PATRONESS OF AMERICAN MISSIONS

**M**ORE than half a century after the failure of the colonization projects of Jacques Cartier, de Roberval, and their immediate successors they were revived by the Sieurs de Monts, de Poutrincourt, and Samuel de Champlain under the patronage of their king, Henry the Great. The piety of this sovereign went hand in hand with his ambition, and he determined to send missionaries to these new colonies for the conversion of the savages to the Christian religion. The question then arose whether Catholics or Huguenots should be selected for this mission, and how they should be transported thither.

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

The Sieur de Poutrincourt, a friend and ally of the Catholic king, but secretly in sympathy with the Huguenots, was about to depart for New France. He had received from the king extensive grants of land in Acadia, where a great and powerful colony was to be established. One of the conditions of this grant was that he should take with him such missionaries as should be designated, but when the choice fell upon a Jesuit, Father Pierre Biard, the Huguenot knight resolved not to burden himself with this unwelcome guest. Accordingly, he slipped away one day in February, 1610, accompanied by a secular priest.

Two years were passed by Biard in attempts to get to his future field of labor. Meanwhile, over in Acadia, Poutrincourt's clerical ally was making the most of his time by baptizing all the Indians that came to the settlement. A few drops of water and a Christian name, which none of them suc-

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

ceeded in remembering afterwards, gave them admission into the same heaven that their friends and protectors, the great Normans, expected to enter after death.

As soon as there had been obtained a sufficiently large number of these new Christians, of whom the star was an old chief, Membertou, who had been serving the devil for more than a hundred years, a list of their names, Indian and Christian, was taken back to France by Charles de Biencourt, Poutrincourt's son. These converts to the faith were expected so to dazzle the eyes of the court that the claims of the Jesuits would be disregarded, and the Huguenot emissaries would be allowed to continue the work of conversion in their own way.

Meanwhile, King Henry had been stricken down by the assassin, Ravailac, and it was to the queen alone, the famous Marie de Médicis, that the list of baptized Indians was presented. As had been expected, she

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

was greatly pleased with this imposing array of converts in her far-away colonies. She expressed herself in such unstinted words of praise for Poutrincourt's zeal that Biard seemed destined to remain in France. And so, indeed, the affair would have turned out, had it not been for the interference of an active lady, the Marchioness de Guercheville, prototype of the women of to-day who stand for the propagation of their religious belief.

She had been one of the belles in the earlier days of King Henry's reign, and was famed throughout France for her beauty and wit. Many tales are told of the power of her charms, which extended even to the king himself. He became one of her ardent wooers. But Madame de Guercheville, knowing that her rank was not high enough to permit her to become his wife, held her honor too high to occupy a less honorable place in his household. She therefore re-

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

pulsed his gallantries with spirit, and repeatedly left the court in order to avoid them. Once he pursued her to her own château some distance from Paris. Francis Parkman relates in a vivid manner how she succeeded in eluding her royal admirer this time also.

There was a royal hunting party in the vicinity of her château, and the king, with two or three companions, purposely became separated from his suite. He made his way to her château, sending forward a messenger to ask for a night's shelter under her roof. His request was freely granted, and elaborate preparations were made for his reception. Every window was illuminated, gorgeously attired pages holding blazing torches were stationed at the gate, and the marchioness, in dazzling costume of rich brocade and sparkling with jewels, stood in the doorway to welcome him. While refreshing himself in his apartment, the king was hastily informed by one of his attendants that the

*Henry IV. and Madame de Guercheville*



W. Booth

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

marchioness was about to depart in her carriage. Descending hurriedly, he found the report to be true, and exclaimed, in amazement, "What, Madame, am I driving you from your home?" "Sire," replied the lady, calmly, "where a king is, he should be master; for my part, I prefer to have some authority where I am;" and without further delay she entered her carriage and was driven to the house of a friend.

The king returned to Paris and gave up his suit. But it is evident he bore no malice toward the spirited marchioness for thus repulsing him, as years afterwards, when she reappeared at court, he presented her to the queen with these words, "Madame, I give you a Lady of Honor, who is a lady of honor indeed."

But now her youth was passed, her beauty gone, and nothing remained save her integrity, indomitable will, and intense piety. She had constituted herself patroness of the

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

American missions, and no less an ambition filled her breast than the conquest of the whole western continent for the propagation of the Catholic faith. When she saw there was danger of the Jesuits being frustrated in their purpose, she determined to take the matter into her own hands and arouse the sympathy of the court in their favor.

Two Huguenot merchants, Du Jardin and Du Chesne, the latter an ancestor of the famous Duquesne, were helping Biencourt equip his ship for the return voyage to Acadia. It was arranged that Biard and another Jesuit, Ennemond Masse, should take passage on this ship, and accordingly they were sent to Dieppe to be ready for its departure. When the merchants learned that these missionaries were to be among their passengers, they flatly refused to go on with their preparations, swearing their loudest Huguenot oaths that if representatives of this order were to be on the ship,

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

they would have nothing more to do with it; they would take any other priests or ecclesiastics, but no Jesuits, unless it were to transport the whole order across the sea.

Madame de Guercheville, who had supposed that her protégés were well on their way to America by this time, was exasperated beyond measure when she heard of the failure of her well-arranged plans. She resolved to punish the rebellious merchants in a way that would wound them the most deeply, which was to buy the whole outfit and compel them to withdraw entirely from the undertaking. Learning that four thousand francs would pay for all they furnished, she determined to raise this amount by taking up a collection among the courtiers and noblemen who surrounded her. The appeal of so charming and popular a lady was met gallantly and generously, and soon the required amount was raised. This the marchioness, with a shrewdness worthy of a

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

modern financier, made doubly profitable to the Jesuits. She bought off the Huguenot merchants, and, besides, gave the Jesuits their interest in the Canadian fishing and fur trade.

They departed on the twenty-sixth of January, 1611, as masters of the ship. A long and trying voyage awaited them, in which, as Biard writes afterwards in his journal, they endured "the sum total of human ills," encountering winds, tempests, and fogs, but, most wonderful and formidable of all, huge icebergs, as "tall and large as the church of Notre Dame." It was afterwards reported in France that they did not fail to assert their authority during this voyage, making themselves quite obnoxious to the Huguenots. This accusation is denied solemnly by Biard in his narrative, where he declares that he and his companion spent their time in hearing confessions, celebrating mass, and engaging in other pious exercises.

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

“What a woman wills, God wills,” the French say. And so it seemed in this case, for through the adroit management of this clever woman the first Jesuit missionaries disembarked on the shores of the New World. A cross was erected, and the arms of the Marchioness de Guercheville were blazoned thereon, as token that they took possession of the country in her name.

But her trials as protectress of these missionaries were not yet over. They soon found that life in Port Royal, under the dictatorship of their religious antagonists, was not a path of roses, the savagery and superstition of the Indians being the least formidable evils. Poutrincourt, vexed at the presence of these “black gowns,” as he called them, placed all the obstacles possible in the way of their success. Two years, therefore, after their arrival they were eagerly watching for the ship that was to take them away.

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

One day in May, 1613, the colonists had gone into the interior in search of food, leaving the little settlement in charge of Louis Hébert, an apothecary of Paris, of whom we shall hear more hereafter. The two friars had remained at Port Royal, lest the ship that they knew to be coming for them should arrive in their absence. They were now at open variance with Poutrincourt and his son, and had been accused by the latter in their letters to France of many misdeeds. The whole settlement was on the point of starvation, and the friars, with the rest, had been obliged to resort to the most desperate devices to keep away the demon of hunger. Ennemond Masse, who had been aptly named "Father Useful," had fashioned a canoe, openly derided by some of the lawless young colonists, but greatly coveted when it was launched and floated smoothly down the river. In this the two friars, who were obliged to forage for themselves, pad-

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

dled along the banks eagerly searching for the nutritious root now known as the potato, which had formed their chief food for many months. But their quest this day was fruitless, and with starvation and failure staring them in the face, they returned dejectedly to the deserted settlement, and, pacing slowly up and down the shore, strained their eyes seaward to catch the first glimpse of the longed-for ship.

Over in Old France, Madame de Guercheville had heard of their trials and of the failure of their efforts in behalf of the savages, owing to the opposition of their enemies. She resolved to form a new colony on the Penobscot, far from the boundaries of the vast territory granted to Poutrincourt. She was urged by Champlain, who was then contemplating a colony at Quebec, to join forces with the Sieur de Monts, who was fitting out another expedition to Acadia. But the very evil she was trying to escape

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

at Port Royal would have been doubly felt in the new colony, for de Monts was a stern Calvinist. Her company was composed of forty-eight persons, including two more Jesuits who were to take the place of Biard and Masse, in case they had perished, which was strongly suspected.

This expedition, commanded by the Sieur de la Saussaye, sailed on March 12, 1613, and arrived at Port Royal early in May. Here they were received by the two missionaries with tears of joy, and no time was lost in taking them on board and bearing them away to the new colony.

But the trials of these long-suffering friars had only begun. The location chosen for the new settlement was Mount Desert Island, which, on account of their miraculous preservation from a furious tempest, the new colonists named St. Savior. Here the settlement was established amid great enthusiasm and good cheer, the Jesuits

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

signalizing the beginning of their missionary labors by baptizing a dying Indian child.

Not long after the landing of the French at this place an English ship from Virginia, under the command of Captain Argall, well known in colonial history as the abductor of Pocahontas, was hovering about in these waters laying in a supply of codfish for the winter. A simple and confiding Indian, discovered walking along the shore, was captured and taken to the captain's ship as a prisoner. The elaborate bows and flourishes which the polite savage made in his interview with Argall were sufficient indication to the English that the French must be somewhere near by. The unsuspecting Indian showed them the exact place where they were located, and Argall hastened forthwith to the place indicated by him, protesting loudly that those who now occupied this territory were pirates and usurpers, for they

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had seized the land that had been given by grant to the English.

Suddenly the huge English hulk appeared before the eyes of the startled Frenchmen, and before they realized what enemy had attacked them, their ship was seized and dismantled, their goods confiscated, and the greater number of them taken prisoners.

This was the first of that series of conflicts between the French and English for supremacy in America, which was terminated nearly a century and a half later in the siege of Quebec. As I shall try to show in the last chapter of this work that the final disaster to the French was in great part due to the desire of two beautiful and unprincipled women for power and influence ; so this first conquest, which proved a serious one through later developments, may be attributed to the ambition of a devout woman to found a great religious colony in America. For had Madame de

## *The Marchioness de Guercheville*

Guercheville been content to leave the two missionaries at Port Royal, the experience and diplomacy of the leaders of this important settlement no doubt would have found some solution to their temporary embarrassment. As it was, Port Royal, too, was soon to fall before the victorious Argall.

One of the four missionaries was killed in the attack on St. Savior. The other three were borne away through wind and tempest to the shores of Virginia, then Biard was taken on a searching expedition to point out the location of Port Royal. How he fared here will be told further on. At last the ship on which he was a prisoner started for France. On this voyage he tells how he spent days hiding behind some barrels in the hold of the ship at the Azores Islands, lest the Portuguese inhabitants, stern Catholics, should discover him and his companions, and call the English to account for imprisoning men of their faith. At last he disembarked at

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Pembroke in Wales, there to perform another service to the grateful English by saving them from being arrested as pirates, and to reflect great glory on his order by meeting and refuting all the arguments of the most learned ecclesiastics of the town against his faith. At last the two missionaries reached their native shores, Father Biard never again to leave them, Ennemond Masse to begin a new chapter of missionary labor in Quebec twelve years later.

The indefatigable marchioness, incensed at the ignominious failure of her pious enterprise, sent an ambassador to London to demand indemnity for the loss of her ships and reparation for the destruction of her colony. Only the first demand was satisfied.

### III

## THE LADY DE LA TOUR

### A FAIR CHATELAINE OF ACADIA

**A**FTER Captain Argall had destroyed Madame de Guercheville's colony of St. Savior, he was ordered by the governor of Virginia to return to that part of the coast and destroy every other French settlement that he might find there. Accordingly, he turned his prow towards Acadia, taking with him his two Jesuit prisoners, Biard and Masse. He declared that for the present they could be of more service to him in pointing out the location of Port Royal than in being hanged in Virginia, according to their deserts.

Arrived at the little settlement, they found it deserted, for, as has been said, the colo-

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nists had gone into the interior in quest of food. The English pillaged the houses and storerooms, stole the cattle, burned the buildings, and then went back to their ships, leaving the place in a state of desolation and ruin. But just as they were about to sail away, the French returned and beheld with dismay the scene of destruction before them. There in a heap of ruins lay the result of seven years' toil, exposure, and suffering. Perceiving the two Jesuits on board the English ship, they saluted them with shouts of derision, maledictions, and curses, for they thought they saw in these two friars the authors of this disaster, believing their perfidy had guided the English to Port Royal to ruin them in their absence. One of them even made his way to the ship and declared, in a private interview with Captain Argall, that Biard was a Spaniard, that he had committed the most odious crimes in France and had fled to Canada

## *The Lady de la Tour*

to escape hanging. While these anathemas of the hapless Port Royalists relieved their feelings, they did nothing toward relieving their desperate situation. There was nothing to do now, defeated and penniless as they were, but to return to France with the first ship, which the greater part of them did, among them the Sieur de Poutrincourt himself. Before leaving Acadia he made over to his son, Charles de Biencourt, all his titles to the seigniory of Port Royal. This dauntless youth, who was so skilful a seaman that at nineteen years of age he had guided a vessel safely across the turbulent Atlantic, was not so easily to be driven away from Acadia, "the most beautiful earthly paradise that God hath ever made." His choice was shared by many of his youthful associates, who, though of noble birth and high lineage, preferred a life of adventure in the New World to idleness, stagnation, and monotony at the Court of

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

France. When, after a few more years of this free and adventurous life, Biencourt died, he named as his heir one of these young noblemen, who had been his friend and the companion of his exile for many years. This was Charles de la Tour, Baron de St. Estienne.

La Tour removed from Port Royal immediately after his friend's death in 1623, and erected a fort opposite the Bay of St. John, at a place now known as Fort Latour. It was strong and well built for those times and often protected its inmates from the invasion of determined rivals and treacherous foes. A flourishing trade was carried on with the Indians, who came down the river St. John to dispose of their furs and other commodities. Into this little harbor came ships from France every year, bringing wares of all kinds and returning laden with valuable skins and fish. Wine was manufactured from the wild grape, the forests

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abounded in game, and the rivers in fish, and all went well for some years in the primitive settlement.

In the course of time its safety was menaced by many rivals, one of the most formidable of whom was La Tour's own father. This gentleman had been in the ruined settlement of Port Royal, and had afterward taken up his residence in England, sworn allegiance to King James, and married one of the ladies in waiting to the queen. As a reward for this loyalty, the king presented him with a baronetcy in Acadia. One day he appeared before Fort Latour in command of a great ship containing a band of sturdy Scots, who were to take forcible possession of the country and become feudal baronets of Acadia. They had already given it the name Nova Scotia, or New Scotland, by which it has ever since been known. La Tour anchored his ship, met his son in a ceremonious conference,

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and demanded that he renounce his French citizenship, declare his loyalty to England, and deliver the fort into his hands. "If those who sent you on this errand think me capable of betraying my country even at the request of a parent," replied young La Tour, "they have greatly mistaken me. The King of France has confided the defence of this place to me, and I shall maintain it, if attacked, to my last breath!" A brisk engagement took place between the forces of father and son, which resulted in the elder La Tour's defeat. His English wife refused the permission accorded her to return to her native land and declared her intention of remaining with her husband, whatever his fate might be. Young La Tour treated his captives generously, building for them a substantial stone house at some distance from the fort, where they passed the rest of their lives in peace, although nominally prisoners.

## *The Lady de la Tour*

As time went on young La Tour found himself harassed by other claimants to his territory, who were far more tenacious than the Scotch baronets had been. One of these proved a formidable enemy who finally succeeded in driving La Tour out of Acadia. This was Charles de Menou, Seigneur d'Aulnay de Charnisay, a Catholic knight who had come over to Port Royal in 1632 in the train of another powerful lord who was to establish a colony there. The lands of Charnisay adjoined those of La Tour, and he contended that the latter did not own this territory, for he had no valid title to it.

Their dissensions extended over a number of years, and finally La Tour was so hard pressed by his enemy that he felt that if he did not soon receive help from the mother country he would be obliged to surrender. He dared not go in search of it himself, lest in his absence his enemy might fall upon the unprotected place and take

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forcible possession of it. In this emergency he turned to one whose character had been formed amid the dangers, uncertainties, and vicissitudes of pioneer life. This was his wife, the Lady La Tour, whose brave deeds place her in the front rank of Canadian heroines.

In 1625, two years after he had inherited the seigniory of Port Royal, Charles La Tour married a Huguenot girl who had come over to Acadia a few years before with a band of French colonists. This is all we learn of her history from the annals of the times. Our knowledge of her begins with her successful attempts to thwart the conspiracies of Charnisay and ends with her heroic defence of Fort Latour. Her isolation in the midst of her savage surroundings had fostered in her a spirit of self-reliance and courage. When, therefore, she was asked by her husband to cross over to France and lay his troubles before their

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Huguenot friends, she consented willingly, and straightway made secret preparations for her departure, that Charnisay might not learn of her purpose. In the mean time, he also had determined to go to France and represent his claims at court.

Nothing more is heard of Madame La Tour until she arrived at Rochelle, where she aroused her Huguenot friends and relatives to promise their aid to her husband in his gallant crusade against Charnisay. But just as she had enlisted the sympathy and assistance of a number of influential persons, she learned, to her dismay, that her enemy himself had made his appearance in France, and was even then trying to procure a decree for her husband's arrest and banishment from Acadia as a traitor. Hearing of her presence in France, he had even gone so far as to get a warrant for her detention on the charge of conniving against the king.

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Without waiting for this order to be put into effect, Madame La Tour made her escape to England, which was then the refuge of persecuted Huguenots. Here she found many friends, and, besides obtaining material aid, succeeded in communicating with her husband and warning him of the danger he was in from Charnisay's misrepresentations at the French Court. In the mean time she fitted out a vessel in London with provisions and munitions of war, and prepared to depart for Acadia with the first favorable wind.

While these two ambassadors in London and Paris were thus conspiring to overthrow the plans of each other, La Tour, receiving no further news from his wife, anxious for her safety and distracted by the ever impending danger from his hated rival, at last decided to go to Boston in search of help and return to his fort before Charnisay had left France. Arriving there one day in the

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summer of 1644, he succeeded in getting admission to the presence of the governor, John Endicott, and laid his case before him. This worthy man was willing to proceed against Charnisay, but, after laying the matter before the magistrates and elders, it was thought that interference on their part should not go farther than a letter of remonstrance to him on the injustice of his conduct. Disappointed and discouraged, La Tour, after remaining two months in Boston, turned the prow of his ship homeward. By a series of fortunate delays he just escaped being captured by Charnisay, who, having come that far on his way home from France, was cruising around carelessly waiting for either of the returning parties, it mattered little whether it proved to be La Tour or his wife.

Scarcely had La Tour sailed out of Boston harbor before a great ship, heavily laden and bearing many passengers, passed

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in. Among these was Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island. But the one of interest here was the Lady La Tour. Six months before this the ship had sailed from England bound for Fort Latour, bearing the cargo of goods with which she herself had laden it. But much time had been spent stopping at various ports loading and unloading merchandise, and by the time they reached the Bay of Fundy Charnisay's ships were already there, and it was not possible to reach Fort Latour without being captured by him. In truth, they were hailed by Charnisay and asked their business in those waters. To this the master of the English ship, first taking the precaution to conceal Madame La Tour in the hold, replied that he was on his way to Boston, and after a few more words was allowed to proceed on his journey.

Once arrived in Boston, Madame La Tour did not allow the remissness of the captain

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in taking her so far out of her way to pass unpunished. She demanded indemnity from the charter company, and, after her cause was tried by a special court of the principal men and magistrates there, she was given two thousand pounds for the inconvenience caused her by the ship's delay. When the verdict was obtained, she seized all the cargo of the ship, valued at eleven hundred pounds, fitted out three vessels, and again turned toward Fort Latour. After more than a year's absence she finally arrived there, once more nearly being captured by one of the enemy's ships, which was lying in wait for her. Thus the three envoys to three different countries in this Acadian feud again found themselves at home. Madame La Tour's mission had proved the most successful, for the indemnity she had procured in Boston was used to add to the fortifications and employ more guards to defend them. Charnisay had accomplished little,

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for his representations at the Court of France were hardly strong enough to offset the known loyalty of La Tour.

Several months passed away in the little fort at St. John without any attacks from the enemy. But he was none the less busy in his crusade against the La Tours, and was at this very time engaged in a movement for their final discomfiture. Enraged at having them both slip out of his hands, he had sent an envoy to Boston with letters to the governor, exonerating himself from the charge of persecution, and endeavoring to prejudice his mind against the whole race of La Tour. He declared them both to be traitors to the King of France, charging Madame La Tour with being of low origin and dissolute habits, and her husband, in company with Biencourt and his followers, with having led wild and licentious lives in the forests.

Hearing of these slanders, La Tour de-

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terminated to go to Boston, refute them, and bring the accuser to justice. Lady La Tour was left to guard the fort in his absence, which, thus unprotected, was soon beset by the spies of Charnisay, watching for an opportunity to take the heroic chatelaine unawares. Soon after La Tour's departure, as the ever watchful enemy was one day cruising about the coast, he was hailed by two of these spies who asked to be taken on board. They had just come from Fort Latour and brought the tidings that the master was still absent, that the force only amounted to fifty men, that there was but a little powder which was almost useless, and that the fort could now easily be captured.

Charnisay determined to storm the fort immediately and capture the fair chatelaine and all her retainers. Accordingly, one day late in this winter of 1645, anchoring his vessels in the harbor of St. John opposite

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Fort Latour, he waited, expecting to see the flag which waved from one of the bastions pulled down as a sign of surrender. For, although the Lady La Tour's stanch spirit was well known to him, since it had foiled his attempts in the past, he thought she would not dare offer resistance to so formidable a fleet as that which now confronted her. Yet the flag continued to wave from the tower. Opening fire on the little fort, his ship was straightway deluged with such a storm of shells that it was nearly sunk before the eyes of the courageous chatelaine, who herself was directing the charge from one of the bastions. The fierce cannonading continued, until, finding the ship too badly shattered to be of further use, and twenty of his men killed, Charnisay, humiliated and enraged, withdrew his forces.

In two months he returned and found the fort in the same defenceless condition. Lady La Tour's hope that her husband

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would arrive in the mean time with re-enforcements was vain, for the enemy had placed ships out at sea to prevent his entering the harbor.

This time she thrice repulsed the enemy's attacks, which were by land, and Charnisay was again compelled to draw off his forces. After failing in other attempts to penetrate into the fort, he finally succeeded in bribing one of the sentries, and on the fourth day of the siege, which was Easter Sunday, Charnisay and his men succeeded in scaling the walls. But before they had climbed down the other side, the garrison within rushed upon them with such force and determination that twelve of his men were killed and he was obliged to withdraw again. He then resorted to diplomacy, proposing to the Lady La Tour that, if she would capitulate, he would give the inmates of the fort life and liberty. Seeing the hopelessness of further resistance, the dis-

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

heartened lady consented to this proposal; better life and liberty for the men who had held out so bravely than final capture and certain death.

The victor no sooner found himself in possession of the fort, for which he had been striving for years, than his real design became evident,—to murder the whole garrison, declare his sovereignty over all of Acadia, and drive the La Tours from the land.

He immediately proceeded to execute this purpose by hanging every man except one, who was given his life for the privilege of taking that of the others. Lady La Tour herself narrowly escaped the same fate, for a halter was placed around her neck and only a whim of the captor spared her life. But the capture of the fort, the brutality of the victors, and uncertainty regarding the fate of her husband so preyed upon her already broken spirit that a few days later she died.

## *The Lady de la Tour*

The story of her defence of Fort Latour has been told by one of New England's poets,<sup>1</sup> but not in the lofty strains of the poet of *Evangeline*, who, a century later, wept tears of anguish over her exile from the same beautiful Acadia that was the scene of Lady La Tour's adventures.

“Of its sturdy defenders  
Thy lady alone  
Saw the cross-blazoned banner  
Float over St. John.  
'Let the dastard look to it!'  
Cried fiery Estienne.  
'Were D'Aulnay King Louis,  
I'd free her again!'

“Alas for thy lady!  
No service from thee  
Is needed by her  
Whom the Lord hath set free.  
Nine days in stern silence  
Her thralldom she bore,  
But the tenth morning came,  
And death opened the door!

<sup>1</sup> Whittier, “St. John, 1647.” See also *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1900, “An Acadian Easter.”

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“As if suddenly smitten  
La Tour staggered back.  
His hand grasped his sword-hilt,  
His forehead grew black.  
He sprang on the deck  
Of his shallop again.  
‘We cruise now for vengeance!  
Give way!’ cried Estienne.

“Oh, the loveliest of heavens  
Hung tenderly o’er him.  
There were waves in the sunshine  
And green isles before him;  
But a pale hand was beckoning  
The Huguenot on;  
And in blackness and ashes  
Behind was St. John.”

A strange fate seemed to guide the fortunes of Charles La Tour, husband of this hapless lady. After the seizure of his fort by Charnisay he spent four years in exile, then, when he was sixty years old, hearing of Charnisay’s death (he was drowned in the Penobscot River) he immediately set sail for France and obtained the restitution of his

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charters. Armed with these, he returned to Acadia, married Charnisay's widow, and thus forever settled the feuds between the two families, and ended this period of Acadian conflict.

SECOND PERIOD  
*PIONEER WOMEN OF QUEBEC*

I

DAME HÉBERT

**W**HILE many of these Acadian colonists sought, like young Biencourt and his companions, little in the New World save novelty and adventure, there were some of their companions who dedicated their lives to the establishment of permanent settlements there. Of these the most conspicuous was Samuel de Champlain, who had been at Port Royal in two of the early attempts to found a colony there, and, in truth, had been haunting these fascinating shores since 1603. Once when on an expedition with another explorer he had sailed up the St. Lawrence as far as the present

*Samuel de Champlain.*



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## *Dame Hébert*

city of Montreal. It was on this occasion that his alert eye, ever on the watch for places more favorable for settlement than those already tried, detected the wonderful natural advantages of the promontory jutting out into the St. Lawrence. In imagination he saw there an imposing fortress rising from the crest of the impregnable rock, warehouses and marts of trade crowning its summit, ships from distant ports anchored at its wharves, and the fertile valley of the St. Lawrence dotted with the thrifty homes of the loyal subjects of France.

A year later, with a few hardy followers, he was established in this place; and thus, in the year 1608, was founded Quebec, the first permanent settlement in Canada. We will turn with him to this new scene of life and activity, and learn something of those pioneer women who in succeeding years made this their home.

On one of his frequent visits to the

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mother country Champlain made a strong appeal for a few thrifty householders to emigrate to the new settlement, offering them many flattering inducements. A number of families yielded to his urgency and cast in their lot with the new colony across the sea. The most prominent of these was Louis Hébert, the man who has been already mentioned as having been left in charge of Port Royal when it was raided by Captain Argall.

Gathering together his small store of drugs and his few household goods, he repaired with his wife and children to Honfleur, whence the ship that was to bear them to America was to sail. It weighed anchor April 11, 1617. As the loved shores of their native land receded from view, tears dimmed the eyes of the patient mother, and the father's heart grew heavy with foreboding. He thought of the life of hardship and privation that awaited them; the long toil

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before the land could be cleared, the rude dwelling to be constructed, every stone of which was to be hewn out of the mountain by his own hand, the interminable winters so ill provided for during the short summers, the fierce enmity of the treacherous savages; but take heart, brave pioneers! hardship and suffering in truth will be yours, but also the reward of your long years of patient thrift,—an honored name in the annals of your adopted country.

Their voyage across the Atlantic was long and stormy. Tossed about upon the huge waves, now poising upon their summits, now sinking into the trough of the sea, the little ship was more than once threatened with destruction. In the face of all this peril the vows and prayers of the two Recollect friars, whom Champlain had invited over to help evangelize the Indians, could avail little to allay the apprehensions of the fear-stricken company. Their terror reached its height,

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when, a few hundred leagues from the coast of New France, there suddenly appeared from out of the dense fog that enveloped them a huge bank of ice that was bearing down upon them with incredible speed. The memory of this wonderful sight remained ever afterward with these simple people, and many a time in after years the great iceberg was discussed as they sat about their blazing logs in the long winter nights at Quebec. Monstrous pieces were detached from the rest, seeming, as they floated and toppled about in the water, like castles, cathedrals, domed buildings, and even whole cities of crystal. These floating mountains closed the passage for more than ninety leagues; and had it not been for the good seamanship of the sturdy Captain Morel, who skilfully turned aside and coasted along them, the vessel would have been crushed into a thousand pieces.

It was in the midst of the general con-

## *Dame Hébert*

sternation caused by this awful danger that Dame Hébert first comes to notice through a gentle act of maternal love. Believing that no human means could deliver them from this impending disaster, the frightened company again begged the friars to invoke the aid of Heaven by public prayers and vows. These devotions finished, as they were about to pronounce a blessing on the kneeling company, Dame Hébert raised her youngest child through the hatchway and asked that it too might share in this pious act.

The voyage was so long that nearly all the provisions intended to be used by the colony already at Quebec were consumed on the ship. Of the abundant supplies expected by the hungry colonists, there was nothing to show but a barrel of pork and a few small stores which the Héberts, with a frugality and forethought characteristic of their after life in Canada, had brought out on their own account. These tided the settlers

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over several anxious periods of dearth during the following winter. After buffeting for three months with the winds and waves of the Atlantic and the treacherous tides and ice of the St. Lawrence, they reached Quebec about the middle of June, 1617, the first colonists of New France who had come to stay.

Though an apothecary by trade, the *Sieur Hébert* determined to devote himself to the cultivation of the soil. His previous experiments in this direction had proven to him the advantage of being a farmer in a country where his compatriots were engaged in exploration, conquest, and barter. Accordingly, after two years of trial, he chose a spot near *Champlain's* fort in the Upper Town, where the soil was fertile, and where the proximity of the fort would afford a reasonable degree of safety from the hostile savages. Here he marked out his farmstead and built a rude but substantial home.

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This house, with its surrounding garden plot and cattle sheds, proved a welcome sight to Champlain as he made his way up the rocky heights. He would gladly have brought over more of such settlers; but his efforts in this direction were continually thwarted through the indifference of the mother-country, which at this time was engaged in commercial and religious contentions in which the interests of her colonies played but a small part.

Some months after their arrival in Quebec, Anne Hébert, the eldest daughter, was married to a young trader named Stephen Jonquest. This was the first marriage ceremony performed in Canada, and was two years and a half earlier than the first one celebrated in New England. Little more is said of this couple in the annals of the times, but frequent reference is made to the second daughter, Guillemette, after her marriage to Monsieur Couillard two years later. Many

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of the prominent Canadian families of to-day claim their descent from this worthy woman. Her life was identified with the principal events which took place in the colony for the next fifty years, acting as sponsor to innumerable Indian babies, protecting in her palisaded cottage the frightened settlers fleeing from the tomahawks of the yelling Iroquois, throwing open her home to wandering *voyageurs* and traders, and in truth playing the part of the thrifty, provident, hospitable matron in the midst of waste and improvidence. She is recalled to the chance visitor in the Quebec of to-day by "Couillard Street," whose crooked windings and ancient houses exhale memories of a historic past.

Ten years after his arrival in the colony the *Sieur Hébert* died. His bones were laid in the cemetery of the *Recollect* friars, but half a century later they were taken up, still enclosed in their cedar coffin, and were transported to a new and more imposing

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church, the first to be interred there. It is said that Madame Couillard, then very old, had herself carried thither to witness the interment.

In 1629 a serious misfortune befell the struggling little colony of Quebec. There had been a Huguenot uprising at Rochelle, and war had been declared by the English, the allies of these Huguenots, against the French, and, as usual, this war was carried into the colonies. At the head of a squadron of three ships, followed by six more, Sir David Kirke, a Protestant of Dieppe employed by the English, set sail for the shores of New France. Had he known to what a pitiful state the colonists of Quebec had been reduced, he would not have deemed so strong a force needed to capture the citadel.

During the winter previous to this Champ-lain had been driven to the most desperate measures to save from utter extinction his little colony, so pitifully weak even now

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after twenty years of existence. No provisions or ammunition had been received from France for two years, and the people had been reduced to the necessity of going into the forest and digging up roots for their sustenance. In this general lack of food Dame Hébert gave the half-starved colonists two barrels of peas, of which seven ounces apiece were daily doled out to them as long as the supply lasted.

One July morning two little towers of the now dilapidated fort fell to the ground without any apparent cause. This presaged evil to the disheartened inhabitants, and their fears were realized a little later when an Indian messenger came running to announce that three large English ships had arrived at Tadoussac. The next day these vessels appeared before Quebec, and their commander called upon Champlain to surrender the city. Seeing the futility, with his few ragged and half-starved followers,

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of attempting to hold out against a foe so powerfully equipped, Champlain capitulated without a struggle, and soon, for the second time in the history of these western colonies, the red banner of England floated over the lilies of France. It was arranged that the French, including Champlain himself, the Recollect and Jesuit friars, should all be taken back to France in the English ships. But what was to be done with the few stray settlers, among them the widow Hébert and her family?

It is said by Canadian historians that the coming of the English at this crisis was hailed with joy by the French, for patriotism and loyalty to the colony had been stifled by the pangs of hunger. Hence, when the victors offered twenty crowns apiece to all who would consent to remain, Dame Hébert and her family accepted the offer. The well-built and substantial farmhouse, surrounded by flourishing gardens and fields of ripening

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grain, presented a more attractive picture than penury in the mother-country.

Though all the inhabitants of Quebec looked upon this worthy family with respect and gratitude, there was one group in particular who turned to them in times of trouble and perplexity, and it is through their records of this period that we glean the scant details of their history. These were the six Recollect friars, who preceded even the Jesuits in missionary work at Quebec, for Champlain's religious zeal had brought them over, that the Christianizing of the Indians might go side by side with colonization. These strange figures, clad in their loose and coarse gray gowns girt at the waist with a cord and having a long pointed hood hanging at the back, were looked upon with wonder and awe as they went among them, teaching, as best they could with the few Indian words at their command, the principles of the Christian faith. When

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they entered the comfortable Hébert cottage, they viewed with pleasure and relief the cleanliness and order that prevailed there, in comparison with the squalor, smoke, and filth of the Indian wigwams: here they found unquestioning faith, bred in the bone; yonder stubborn silence or stupid acquiescence. Many were the tales related here of dying Indian babies whom they had reached just in time to baptize and thus "send them flying to heaven," or of some stealthy and almost successful attack of a band of Iroquois on their quarters. Dame Hébert often allowed the peaceful Hurons to come into her kitchen and warm themselves at her fire. But she confided to the friars that she never dared trust them from under her eyes, for they stole with their feet as well as with their hands.

When it was decided that the Recollects were to be sent back to France, for the English said they would have none of these

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barefooted friars teaching their doctrines to the credulous savages, they submitted humbly, but were much perplexed over the fate of some of their protégées, in particular three young Indian girls to whom they had given the names, Faith, Hope, and Charity. These girls had been given to Champlain as hostages for two Frenchmen, one of them Dame Hébert's baker, who had been murdered by an enraged Indian for refusing his too importunate requests for bread. Champlain had placed these hostages under the charge of the friars until he could send them to France to have them educated.

However, when they attempted to embark with Champlain, the English peremptorily refused to allow them to go. The entreaties of the friars, and the tears and pleadings of the girls themselves, proved of no avail, and they were obliged to remain in Quebec. Here good Dame Hébert stepped into the breach, and, placing her arms around the

## *Dame Hébert*

weeping damsels, she declared her intention of taking them into her own home and caring for them until the French should return. Then the little group remaining watched their banished compatriots march off to the ships, the officers taking with them their arms and baggage and all that belonged to them, the soldiers their arms, clothing, and a beaver robe apiece, and the priests their prayer books. Sorrowfully Dame Hébert and her family with their new charges returned to their home on the cliffs, gazing long and wistfully at the hostile ships which were bearing away the only friends they had in this distant land.

Three years passed and still there was no news of the return of the French. Old France cared little for the re-acquisition of these desolate rocks, which twenty years of continual effort on the part of the dauntless Champlain had not succeeded in making habitable. The climate was severe, the dis-

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tance great, the outlay for fitting out expeditions excessive, and it was so vast a land that, should it be settled by emigration, it would greatly weaken the strength of the mother country. The king, upon being appealed to, contemptuously demanded what benefit had been derived from New France in the ninety years since Jacques Cartier had claimed it for the French crown. It must be, it was said, that the French were not adapted to founding colonies, or that the welfare of these colonies had been sacrificed to private interests. These and similar arguments were urged upon Champlain, and even his sanguine nature was somewhat affected by their logic.

But in 1632 the treaty of St. Germain was signed, by which the English placed the French again in possession of the whole of Canada. The French, taking courage and casting aside the failures of the past, resolved to make another attempt to found a great

*A General View of Quebec from Point Levy.*



### *Dame Hébert*

colony there. Accordingly, in April of the same year an expedition was fitted out and sent over to Quebec by the great Cardinal Richelieu. Two Jesuit priests accompanied this expedition, as the Recollects were no longer in favor at court.

As they approached the rocky promontory of Quebec, a flag of welcome was waved to them from the only thrifty house in the place, all the others being half in ruins. It was Dame Hébert and her family, who were signalling to their approaching countrymen, and it was they who met them at the boat landing soon afterwards with tears of joy.

The missionaries immediately repaired to the Hébert cottage, an event which is thus referred to by one of them:—

“We went to celebrate the holy mass in the oldest house in this country, the house of Madame Hébert, who settled near the fort in the lifetime of her husband; she has a fine family, one of her daughters being married to a respectable French-

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man here. God is continually blessing them. He has given them beautiful children, their cattle are flourishing, their land bears fine grain. This is the only French family settled in Canada. They were trying to get back to France, but learning that the French would soon return to Quebec, they took courage and resolved to stay. When they saw the white flags on the masts of our ships, their joy was indescribable; but when they found us in their own house saying holy mass, which they had not heard for three years, God! what joy! tears of gratitude fell from their eyes. Oh, how heartily we all sang the *Te Deum Laudamus!*”

After the return of their countrymen the daily life of the Hébert family flowed on peacefully, their prosperity increasing from year to year. Experiments in grain and fruit culture were made, and the soil responded generously to their efforts. There was one mishap, however, which put them back several years. Some drunken savages, profiting by a fresh supply of wine which had just arrived, killed all Dame

### *Dame Hébert*

Hébert's cattle and destroyed her apple-trees. These they pulled up by the root, the better to get at the fruit. They were the first fruit-trees planted in New France, and had been tended diligently by the ambitious Hébert, that he might prove to his kinsmen across the sea the possibilities of fruit-culture in the soil of Canada. In extenuation of their conduct the savages good-naturedly explained, when they became sober, "It is not we who have done this, but thy people, who have given us this drink."

Dame Hébert was a mother to all the discarded Indian waifs in the country. She took charge also of a solitary negro boy, the first ever seen in Canada, who had been left there by the English when they evacuated Quebec. She once asked him if he wished to be baptized, so that he might be like the French. He answered "yes," but immediately asked if he would not be skinned when baptized. He had seen victims of

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Indian cruelty treated thus, and was in terror lest the same thing might happen to him. He noticed that they laughed at his question, and so he explained, as best he could in his broken French, "You say that by baptism I shall be like you; I am black and you are white, so you will have to take off my skin to make me like you."

There was an Indian baby whom Dame Hébert had held over the font in baptism, giving it a euphonious French name. "I know not what has come over our little François Olivier," said the Indian mother, holding the child up to its father, swaddled in the French fashion; "when he is dressed like this, he laughs all the time, but when I dress him in our way, he never ceases crying." The taciturn chief paid little heed to these words, but later vouchsafed the opinion that baptism had exorcised the evil spirits from young François.

It would be a long task to enumerate the

## *Dame Hébert*

number of times Dame Hébert piously acted as sponsor to these baptized Indian infants in the course of her long life in Canada, but it is safe to say that the greater number of all those who received this sacrament during her lifetime were held in her arms. She usually took them after this ceremony and cared for them until they died, or were taken away by their parents.

The friendly Indians hovered continually about her house. They stood looking in the windows while the family were eating, and begged in expressive pantomime for a morsel from the table. When their presence became too irksome Dame Hébert used her clock as a means of getting rid of them, in a clever ruse devised by the missionaries and found to be effective when nothing else was. One of them describes it as follows:—

“As to the clock, a thousand things are said about it. They think it is some living thing, for they cannot imagine how it sounds itself, and when

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they think it is going to strike they look to see if we are all there, and that no one is hidden behind it shaking it. They think it hears, especially when, for a joke, some young Frenchman calls out, just as it is on the last stroke, 'That's enough!' and then it stops. They call it the Captain of the day, and ask when they come to see us how many times the Captain has already spoken. They remain with us a whole hour and sometimes several, in order to be able to hear it speak. They used to ask at first what it said, and we told them two things that they have remembered very well. One, that when it sounded four o'clock in the afternoon in winter it was saying, 'Get out! go away, that we may close the door,' and immediately they arose and went out. At midday it said, 'Come, put on the kettle!' but this order was obeyed more reluctantly."

Several years after the death of the *Sieur Hébert*, *Dame Hébert* took as a second husband the *Sieur Hébout* or *Hubout*, a well-to-do settler of *Quebec*. Little more is heard of her after this event, although we are led to believe that the new husband was

### *Dame Hébert*

as pious as his predecessor, for he figures prominently in baptisms and christenings. It is not recorded whether or not the bones of this Sarah were placed at her death beside those of her first husband, the "Abraham of the colony," but her life remains as a shining monument to the self-sacrifice and dauntless courage of the pioneer women of the New World.

## II

### MADAME DE CHAMPLAIN

#### THE FIRST LADY OF CANADA

A CONTEMPORARY of Dame Hébert at Quebec for the short period of four years was the young wife of Samuel de Champlain. She was the daughter of the Sieur de Boullé, secretary to the king's chamber, and sister of one of Champlain's fellow-navigators. It was through his association with Eustace de Boullé that Champlain became acquainted with Helen, and when she was but a child of twelve he asked her hand in marriage. A contract was drawn up in which it was agreed that her dowry of forty-five hundred francs should be immediately turned over to him, and that she should remain in the home of

## *Madame de Champlain*

her parents until she had attained a suitable age. Meanwhile, he returned to Quebec with this capital, which he sorely needed to keep his little colony from ruin.

In the year 1620, the same year the Pilgrim Mothers landed at Plymouth Rock, Madame de Champlain crossed the ocean with her husband to establish her home in the New World. Quebec at this time was at its lowest ebb. As she disembarked, what did this child of luxurious surroundings behold? A few dirty, half-clad Indians, who looked at her in stupefied amazement that anything so beautiful had consented to come among them. Instead of the manorial estates and gallant cavaliers she had pictured in her imagination, she saw only the homely cottage of the Hébert family and the crude irregular habitation of Champlain, neglected and half in ruins. The cavaliers were a few ragged French adventurers, who forgot their native chivalry in their eager-

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

ness to learn the state of their returning governor's purse. She took up her residence in the dilapidated habitation, with the three maids she had brought with her, and began to face a life of exile with a husband thirty years her senior.

Monsieur de Champlain, who was so strict and pious a Catholic that he declared the conquest of a continent of less moment than the conversion of the savages to the true faith, discovered soon after bringing his wife to Canada that she professed the Huguenot faith of her father. He lost no time in applying himself vigorously to her conversion. Nothing could have been more conducive to his purpose than the religious observances followed out in his household. While the family were partaking of breakfast, one of his attendants read aloud from some sacred historian, and at evening from the "Lives of the Saints." Public prayers were said frequently during the day,

### *Madame de Champlain*

and morning, noon, and night the Angelus was rung to admonish the little colony of the duty of silent prayer.

In such an atmosphere it is not strange that Helen soon gave up the Huguenot doctrines of her family and accepted the Catholic faith of her husband; in truth, his efforts in her behalf were more than successful, for she not only became an ardent Catholic, but resolved to become a nun.

Meanwhile, she devoted herself assiduously to the instruction of the wandering Indians who gathered around her door. To them this beautiful creature from beyond the sea was something almost more than human, and they gladly would have worshipped her instead of that unseen deity in which she was continually urging them to believe. She wore dangling at her belt one of those chatelaines so dear to the hearts of the young girls of the present day. In the tiny mirror of this trinket they saw reflected

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

their bristling hair and painted faces, and in awe and wonder promised all the divinity asked of them in return for one look into its magical surface.

At last want of the comforts and luxuries to which she had been accustomed so wore upon her health, and homesickness and domestic unhappiness upon her spirits, that Champlain resolved to take her back to France. They sailed August 15, 1624. When she once more reached her native land, she determined never again to leave it, and as soon as possible put her plan of becoming a nun into execution. She finally founded a convent and died at the age of fifty-six in the halo of saintship.

Champlain returned to Quebec, where all his interests were centred, and which seemed to hold a dearer place in his heart than his young wife; though to his honor be it said that in one of his exploring expeditions he discovered a small island which he named

### *Madame de Champlain*

after her, l'Île de St. Hélène, and which the people of Montreal, who use it as a pleasure resort, know by that name even to the present day.

Ten years more of activity in New France, where he was ever the ruling spirit, and the great navigator passed away in the place which had been the scene of so many struggles and adventures, on Christmas Day, 1635, unsoothed by woman's gentle ministrations, but sped on his way to heaven by those of two missionaries. He was laid away in the land of his exile, but the spot where this Canadian pioneer was buried has never been authentically located.

For many years Dame Hébert and Helen de Champlain were the only women pioneers to take up their residence in New France. In 1634 the surgeon Giffard and his family emigrated and built a substantial stone manor-house at Beauport, a league's distance from Quebec. Here a family of sons and

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

daughters was reared who gave to Canada a numerous posterity that became distinguished in the literary, religious, and political life of the community. But the inducements so cheerfully set forth by the missionary, "piety, freedom, and independence," were not powerful enough to attract other families; particularly as these advantages had to be enjoyed under the strict laws laid down by the zealous priests or pious and narrow-minded governors, who punished any who failed to attend mass with the pillory or whipping-post.

The emigration of settlers, therefore, was very limited for the next twenty years, and was confined almost wholly to single men who came over on missions of war, trade, and adventure, and to single women whose purpose was to Christianize the savages, rather than to people the country. The first and most conspicuous of these were Madame de la Peltrie and Marie Guyard.

### III

## MADAME DE LA PELTRIE

FOUNDRESS OF THE FIRST GIRLS' SCHOOL  
IN CANADA

**W**HILE Champlain and his sturdy band of pioneers at Quebec were bartering skins with the friendly Hurons and making occasional sallies against the Iroquois, the missionaries there were combating the barbarism and superstition of these savages. Yet up to this time little had been accomplished in this warfare, and Father Le Jeune, superior of the mission, realizing how futile had been their efforts, one day sent a plaintive cry across the ocean for money and reinforcements. His idea at this time was that if the children could be civilized and reared in the Christian religion, through

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

their influence the parents would eventually become Christianized, "for in no other way," he declared, "can anything be made of these old stumps."

He pointed out how easy it would be for some benevolent French lady to establish a school for girls. (One had already been established for boys, the famous Jesuit College of Quebec, which antedates Harvard College by one year.) In his letter of 1635 he urged the need of such institutions more strongly than ever. "My God!" wrote this zealous missionary, "if the excess and superfluity of certain dames of France were employed in this so holy work, what blessings would they not bring down upon their families! What glory in the eyes of the angels to have gathered up the blood of the Son of God and to have applied it to these poor unbelievers!"

The greatest ladies of France read these letters with avidity, and a lively interest was

## *Madame de la Peltrie*

excited in their hearts over the woes of the poor savages. Among them was Madame de la Peltrie, a widow of wealth and position, whose name has come down to posterity in the annals of her adopted country. Let us look back a little and see how it came about that she separated herself from home, friends, the pleasures of civilization, to minister to the aborigines of the Canadian wilderness.

A beautiful and charming girl, with mischievous dark eyes and smiling mouth, reared amid all the luxury of the French gentlewomen of the time, was married at Alençon, in the year that marked the sailing of the "Mayflower," to a young gentleman of rank, the Seigneur de la Peltrie. Five years later she became a widow. Young, rich, and pious, she began to long for some outlet for her energy, for some means of doing great good and laying up treasures for herself in heaven, but at the same time to become the object of admiration and wonder

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

while she still remained on earth. Ten years slipped by before her desires took the definite form of a life of philanthropy in Canada, and this transpired only through a serious illness that befell her.

At the crisis of the disease she is said to have heard the voice of the Lord saying to her: "It is my will that thou goest to Canada to labor for the salvation of Indian girls; thus I would be served by thee and receive proofs of thy fidelity; in return I shall grant thee many favors in that barbarous country." "Lord," replied Madame de la Peltrie, "it is not to me, a great sinner, that so great a favor should be shown." "True," replied the Lord, "but I wish to make use of thee in that country, and notwithstanding the obstacles that will arise to prevent the execution of my orders, thou wilt go there and there thou wilt die." This divine communication so encouraged her that she resolved to cross over to the new

*Madame de la Peltrie*

colony immediately and begin the work thus so clearly laid out for her.

But she soon discovered that to make so important a decision was far more easy than to put it into practice. Difficulties arose which she had not foreseen. The most formidable of these was the opposition of her relatives, who viewed the plans of their erratic young kinswoman with open disapproval. Every obstacle possible was put in the way to prevent the fortune that would sometime fall to them from being squandered upon cannibals and barbarians. Her father begged her to defer the execution of her plans until after his death, but finding that his prayers were unheeded, he resorted to threats, saying that he would disinherit her if she persisted.

This disapproval on the part of her relatives only strengthened Madame de la Peltrie's determination. Never had the fetters of civilization seemed so galling to

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

this young enthusiast. She longed to exchange the luxury and inactivity of her present life for the rude surroundings of a new country. In imagination she could see herself yonder a fair Lady Bountiful, admired and loved by all who knew her, the idol of the simple savages, dispensing her wealth and good deeds so generously that, as the years rolled on, thousands of swarthy maidens would become children of civilization, and would revere her as their savior and benefactress. But in the mean time she was sorely perplexed how to take the first steps toward accomplishing this pious work without causing her father to become wholly estranged from her,—an event which would have put an end to it by depriving her of her income. Finally, she decided to avail herself of a suggestion that her father was continually urging upon her, that of marrying again, for he considered this the most effectual means of binding her to

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

the conventional life of women of her rank.

But Madame de la Peltrie determined that her marriage should be one only in name, that she might free herself from it at any moment and repair to her chosen field of labor, at the same time satisfying her father, silencing the importunities of her other relatives, and enabling her to continue her arrangements secretly. She chose as the person best suited to aid her in carrying out this plan an old friend who was intrusted with the care of her property, and straightway wrote to him proposing a mock marriage.

The chosen bridegroom was a rich and influential gentleman, of great piety, who had determined never to marry. Several years later he founded a mystical order or brotherhood which became conspicuous in the religious life of France. He was well known throughout the country, not only

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

because of the high position he held, for he was treasurer of the kingdom, but also on account of his strange religious ideas. Imagine, then, the consternation that filled his breast, when he received the proposition from the beautiful young widow that, in order to free her from the legal control of her relatives, he should contract a marriage with her. To his dismay, all his friends and advisers unanimously declared that he ought to accept the offer. With considerable trepidation he proposed the matter to Madame de la Peltrie's father, who, surprised and pleased that so close a friend had thus honored his daughter, had the lady summoned into his presence and immediately made known to her Monsieur de Bernières' offer. To his delight "the prudent young widow answered him with respect and modesty, that, as she knew Monsieur de Bernières to be a favorite with him, she, too, preferred him to all others." Several weeks

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

after this, during which the reluctant suitor's scruples had almost resulted in the abandonment of the plan, they were married and thereafter appeared in public as man and wife.

The father's death followed close upon this marriage, and "thus ended," says a pious writer, "the pretended engagement between this virtuous lady and gentleman, which caused at the time so much inquiry and excitement among the nobility of France, and which, after the lapse of two hundred years, cannot fail to excite feelings of admiration in the heart of every virtuous woman!"

But the pretence of marriage was kept up a little while longer, as this permitted Monsieur de Bernières to give his supposed wife the help she needed in completing her arrangements to depart for New France. They journeyed together in state to Tours, where Madame de la Peltrie selected two Ursuline nuns as her assistants. Afterward

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### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

they went to Paris, where the news of her wonderful project excited so much enthusiasm that the queen, Anne of Austria, summoned her to an audience and expressed her approval of it. Others followed her example, and Madame de la Peltrie and her intended journey to Canada, as well as her strange marriage, were for a time the absorbing topics of conversation in the French capital. At last they hastened to Dieppe, where the future foundress made her final preparations to cross the sea.

The party which was finally made up were all to play a more or less important part in the pioneer life of Canada. It consisted of Madame de la Peltrie, whose income was to go for the maintenance of a school for Indian girls; Mother Marie Guyard, the subject of the next sketch, who was to be principal or superior of it; Marie de St. Bernard, an assistant, who proved to be one of the most worthy pioneers in the cause of education

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

in Canada, although her name is scarcely known outside the annals of the Ursuline convent; Charlotte Barré, companion to Madame de la Peltrie; and another little group of women, called Hospitalières, to whom a chapter will be devoted farther on. On the fourth of May, 1639, these seven women, together with several missionaries who were going over to re-enforce their brethren, embarked for the scene of their future labors. Monsieur de Bernières saw them off, greatly relieved to find himself thus happily extricated from a situation that had promised him serious perplexities.

Preceding them across the Atlantic, let us join the little company gathered at the landing-place in Quebec to meet them on the first day of August of the same year. Of the two hundred and fifty settlers, nearly all were present. There was the new governor, the Sieur de Montmagny, successor

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

to Champlain, attended by a small retinue of soldiers attired in all the martial splendor they could muster. Near by were the missionaries, forming, in their long black robes and broad-brimmed black hats, a striking contrast to the gayly attired soldiers. Holding aloof stood a group of Algonquin Indians, whose naked or scantily clad figures and painted faces indicated how futile had been the attempts of the missionaries at civilizing them. Nor were women wanting in this gathering of Quebec citizens. Madame Couillard was there, with her now grown-up children about her, as well as the wife and daughters of the surgeon, Monsieur Giffard, and the fair Madeleine de Repentigny, daughter of the admiral of the French fleet.

Father Le Jeune, superior of these missions, had caused everything possible to be done to give Madame de la Peltrie and her companions a warm welcome, yet it was

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

with feelings of misgiving that he viewed their near approach. It was he who had been instrumental in bringing these women over, yet the same question vexed the mind of this wary, wizen-faced, shrewd little priest that has troubled that of many a pastor in the New World since then. The funds provided for carrying on benevolent work in these colonies were so small that the missionaries themselves were frequently on the verge of starvation. How, then, were these seven delicate women to live in a country where there was scarcely a roof to shelter them, where they would have to brave the rigors of long and terrible winters, eat insufficient and uncooked food, and be exposed to contagious diseases and the treachery of the savages? Helpless creatures, who would only add new trials to those with which the colonists were already burdened.

Meanwhile, how had they fared in their voyage across the Atlantic? For more

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

than two months they were buffeted by wind and storm, and many a time the great waves rose higher than the ship and threatened to engulf it. The passengers were filled with terror, and were frequently on their knees praying and making public vows for their safety. Once, when the group of timid women faced imminent death in the form of a huge iceberg, Marie Guyard, with French grace, arranged her draperies carefully about her, that she might die decently, she said. When they got as far as Tadoussac, they were obliged to leave the larger vessel, and ascend to Quebec in a little fishing craft, subsisting for a fortnight on uncooked salted codfish.

At last, to the booming of cannon, these pioneers in women's charitable and educational work in Canada stepped on shore, "coming forth from their floating prisons," said Le Jeune, gallantly, forgetting for the moment his gloomy misgivings, "as fresh

*Madame de la Peltrie*

and rosy as when they left their homes, the vast ocean, with its billows and tempests, not having harmed them in the least." In a transport of joy they fell upon their knees and kissed the soil of their new country, declaring themselves willing to moisten it with their sweat, and, if need be, to dye it with their blood. Headed by the pious governor, they went in a procession to the little church to thank God for their preservation. On the way thither, Madame de la Peltrie stopped and kissed all the little red-skinned maidens whom she met, not minding in the least whether they were dirty or not. The remainder of this first day in the New World was spent in examining the wigwams of the Indians, of which the filth, smoke, and naked or half-clad inmates would have daunted hearts less brave.

That night the foundress of the seminary for Indian girls lay down upon her hard pallet of pine twigs, weary and sick at heart

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

over the misery and degradation that confronted her. The brilliant hues with which her imagination had painted this scene of her future labors became ashen and dull. In her dreams naked savages pursued her with uplifted tomahawks, black-robed priests turned forbiddingly from her, and the ship that had brought her to these desolate shores appeared as a dim speck on the horizon, relentlessly pursuing its way back to France. But when she was awakened the next morning by the guns of the fort firing off the morning salute, heard the chapel bell calling to early service, and saw the brilliant August sun streaming into the narrow windows of her chamber, hope and courage awoke in her breast. Filled with the thought of the great work that was before her she arose and went forth to put her hand to the plough, to till this field that had lain fallow for centuries.

Madame de la Peltrie's life in New

*The Old French Inn*



### *Madame de la Peltrie*

France is inseparably associated with the school she founded, for it developed into the great Ursuline Seminary of Quebec, still active and flourishing after more than two and a half centuries. She and her companions took up their residence in a little two-roomed house previously used as a storehouse, which they playfully called their palace. It was in the Lower Town, near what is now known as the Champlain Market. The French inn now occupying the site is old, quaint, and foreign, and the traveller stopping there finds little difficulty in carrying himself back over the long flight of years, and conjuring up vivid pictures of the landing of these gentle French ladies. What emotions must have filled their hearts at the sight of this pitiful home standing almost solitary amid the desolate loneliness of the little clearing, with its background of vast and impenetrable forests!

The first care of the new arrivals was to

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

devote themselves to the study of the Indian languages, under the tutelage of the missionaries, who had spent many sorrowful and tedious hours in this labor. But what it had taken them years to learn from the jeering and deceitful savages, who enjoyed nothing better than to hear them use in good faith the obscene and indecent words they had taught them, was imparted to these apt and eager pupils in much less time.

The school began with six Indian and a few French girls. But soon reports of this wonderful institution, where girls, irrespective of race or condition, were taken in, clothed in beautiful garments, and given plenty of food, spread throughout the neighboring country, and crowds of red-skinned maidens flocked thither. So many made their appearance that the miniature seminary could not accommodate them all, and soon a larger and more commodious build-

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

ing was erected in the Upper Town, on the same site the school occupies to-day.

Madame de la Peltrie threw herself into the work of caring for these little savages with all the enthusiasm of her ardent French nature. She assumed the duty of teaching them the more polite accomplishments, while Marie Guyard and the other two women instructed them in the Catechism and the French language. It became her favorite diversion, after spending an hour or two in teaching them to sew, to dress them up like little French children, and take them to visit their Indian parents or to the chapel not far distant; and grotesque-looking little objects they were, with tight Norman caps covering their black and glistening locks, and snowy kerchiefs pinned round their tawny throats. They regulated all their actions by hers, and frequently astonished those about them by making an elaborate courtesy like a grand dame of France.

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

Their devotion to godly exercises was praiseworthy, for one frequently stumbled upon them in the most unexpected places kneeling and piously telling their beads, piping out the chorus in a shrill minor key in the seminary choir, or cornering their astonished relatives and proposing to them the knotty questions of the Catechism.

They became greatly attached to their cicerone. Her beauty, elegance of deportment, and high breeding impressed themselves even upon their untutored minds, and they willingly left their parents to follow her. It was one of her duties to inculcate in them purity and modesty, two virtues almost unknown to them. They devoted themselves so assiduously to the cultivation of these virtues that, when one of their number would appear with her neck bare, they would point the finger of shame at her; and once, when a man attempted to shake hands with little Indian Marie, she ran away in

*Madame de la Peltrie*

terror and diligently washed the infected spot.

It will be seen from these incidents how readily the daughters of the red men took to the new order of things inaugurated by this institution. Yet early in its history the main object of its establishment, the education and Christianizing of these girls, failed of success, and it was afterwards devoted principally to the education of the daughters of French settlers. The nomadic character of the savages, who every winter withdrew into the forest in search of game, taking their children with them, effectually prevented them from being benefited by the instruction they received there; for what they learned during the summer would be forgotten or disregarded amid the profligacy or coarseness of their winter surroundings. A few grew up into modest and discreet young women, "with nothing savage about them but their skins," who, having been provided with a

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

little dowry by benevolent French women, were in time married to Frenchmen, and from them many Canadians of to-day claim their origin.

Madame de la Peltrie's life in New France was one of strenuous endeavor. Aside from her duties in the seminary, she devoted herself to the study of the Indian languages, and is said even to have tilled the soil with her own hands. After the first few years of her life, the historian only gives occasional glimpses of her, romantic and visionary always. One Holy Thursday, according to an ancient custom, in company with Madeleine de Repentigny, whose father, with his family and forty-five retainers, had settled in Quebec in 1636, she is seen washing the feet of the poor women of the colony; while the governor and his staff performed the same office for the men. "God knows," exclaimed the missionary who described this pious act, "how affected these barbarians

### *Madame de la Peltrie*

were at seeing people of such quality at their feet! We explained to them why we exercised this act of humility, and they were intelligent enough to comprehend it. But their pleasure was still more evident, when, after this ceremony, we served them a fine dinner." Again Madame de la Peltrie is pictured to us attending the midnight mass one Christmas and kneeling at the altar in the midst of forty converted Indians. Another time they are exchanging New Year's gifts, and one of the missionaries expresses himself well pleased with the handsome prayer-book given him by this lady. She frequently journeyed to the neighboring parish of St. Joseph by water, accompanied by some of the little Indian girls nicely clad in the French fashion, and was received with delighted wonder by the Indians, who fired off all their guns in her honor.

In the year 1642, hearing of a new and romantic settlement about to be formed in

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

Montreal, of which we, too, shall hear in the course of this narration, she ascended thither. Her biographer says that she was led to take this step through her desire to extend her pious labors to the savage nations of the North. At Montreal her picturesque figure is seen accompanying a band of devotees to the top of Mount Royal, in fulfilment of a vow which had saved their newly built fort from a threatened flood. Thirsting for still further adventure, she tried to accompany some Jesuit missionaries to the far Huron country, to instruct and minister to these distant nations. It required great diplomacy on the part of the missionaries to dissuade her from this perilous enterprise. Reluctantly she returned to Quebec and to her deserted sisters, whom, in her zeal for the newer and greater work that had called her, she had left in a state of destitution.

She continued to reside at Quebec, in a cottage built at her expense within the semi-

*Madame de la Peltrie*

nary enclosure, all the rest of her life. She died in 1671, at the age of sixty-eight years, thirty-three of which had been passed in New France. She was ministered to in her last sickness by a young priest, Monsieur de Bernières, nephew of the man who had played so important a part in her early life.

She never separated herself from the world by any religious vows, although she dressed in a half-religious garb. But the companion of her exile, who had crossed the ocean with her and who for thirty years was her counsellor and friend, was an Ursuline nun. This was the distinguished woman known in Canadian history as Mother Marie Guyard of the Incarnation.

#### IV

### MOTHER MARIE GUYARD OF THE INCARNATION

**A**LMOST every event of Marie Guyard's life has been recorded either by her own pen or that of some faithful historian. Her letters and memoirs form the basis of the most valuable histories of the early days of Canada. They are quoted both by secular and ecclesiastical writers, for no movement in the colony from the time of her arrival in 1639, whether it had to do with trade, exploration, politics, or religion, escaped her observation or the record of her faithful pen. She gives her opinion of all the new arrivals, bishops, officers, and governors; she knew the history and characteristics of all the neighboring Indian tribes;

*Marie Guyard, Mother Mary de l'Incarnation*



## *Mother Marie Guyard*

she kept watch of the public morals, helped the poor, reprov'd the indolent, cheered the discouraged, and was, in truth, the inspiration of the little colony for nearly thirty-five years. She is met with more frequently, perhaps, than any other woman in the stories of early Canadian life. Ecclesiastical writers have pronounced eloquent eulogies on her character; and one, the Abbé Casgrain, has filled three small volumes with the story of her life.

Her embarkation at Dieppe and arrival in New France have already been sufficiently dwelt upon in the story of Madame de la Peltrie, as have also certain features of the new seminary. The labors of these two women in founding the seminary were in many respects identical, yet in this sketch of Mother Marie Guyard I find it necessary to dwell a little more on this institution and the events in the colony which affected its growth, in the hope that I may, through this

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

medium, reflect her character. Her skilful management and strong executive ability brought the struggling institution through many perils to which the gentler and less aggressive nature of Madame de la Peltrie would have succumbed. And although no special acts of bravery or heroism are related of her, she was the centre from which emanated the very life of the colony, the general on whom the whole success of the campaign depended.

Despite many trials and disappointments in the first year of her residence in New France, her letters to the mother country were so full of enthusiasm that those who had not been permitted to accompany her were again fired with a zeal to share the labors of their sisters in the New World. The result was that two more women came over in the spring to re-enforce them. Their arrival made it evident that the present quarters of the seminary were too restricted,

## *Mother Marie Guyard*

and in the spring of 1641 the first stone of a new one was laid. It was hardly well under way before they were all thrown into a state of consternation and dismay over the unexpected departure of the foundress for Montreal. She not only took with her her servants, but her furniture as well. Nor was this all. There was reason to believe that, if she decided to reside there permanently, she would also withdraw her financial aid from the seminary at Quebec. In these straits Mother Marie bethought herself of the expedient of beginning an extended correspondence with individuals in France, to induce them to contribute to the building of this school. She entered into the work with enthusiasm, and the first year is said to have written over six hundred letters. Thus she obtained funds to supply their more pressing needs.

After an absence of a year, as has been already said, Madame de la Peltrie returned

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

to Quebec, never again to desert her protégées and dependants. The new seminary was finished and dedicated amid great rejoicing, and the future income of the institution was placed upon an assured basis. Other women were sent from France to share the burdens of their sisters, bringing with them ample stores and many little conveniences which greatly lightened the hardships of this life in the forest. To be sure, the new building, which seemed to them so commodious, was contracted enough at the best, for it was only ninety-two feet long and twenty-eight feet wide. They had to move into it before it was half finished and passed the entire winter (that of 1643) with no ceiling but the rafters ; the fireplaces smoked and gave out little heat, although two hundred cords of wood were consumed in them. But these seemed trivial in comparison with the trials they already had suffered.

In the year 1649 a band of four or five

### *Mother Marie Guyard*

hundred Huron Indians, the remnant of those once populous tribes, crushed, pursued, and almost annihilated by the successive onslaughts of the terrible Iroquois, finally deserted their ruined villages many hundred leagues to the north and took refuge among their saviors and friends, the French of Quebec. The history of the colony from this time on for nearly thirty years is little else than the history of the treacherous ambushes and attacks of the Iroquois, whose hatred was concentrated on these French for their friendliness to the Hurons. They appeared everywhere, prowling along rivers, skulking in forests, endeavoring to cut off food supplies, and suddenly descending upon isolated settlements and massacring all the inhabitants. To protect Quebec from their murderous attacks, Monsieur d'Ailleboust, the governor, had palisaded forts erected in the more settled parts where the defenceless in-

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

habitants could take refuge at the first alarm. The settlers themselves, day as well as night, never went abroad without a gun or hatchet. Yet despite these precautions, there were many terrible massacres throughout the country, and many a white man's scalp was carried dangling to the belts of the victorious enemy.

Yet Quebec took a firm foothold at this time and grew and prospered. "We think we are on the brink of a terrible precipice," writes Mother Marie to her son in France, "when we suddenly find ourselves on a sure footing. We hear about some catastrophe to be expected from the Iroquois, yet at the same time our settlers go on marrying, building, multiplying, clearing the land, and tilling the soil." There is a picture of her about this time hanging on the walls of the present seminary at Quebec. She sits at the foot of an ash-tree and catechises her little Indian pupils. These stand about in

### *Mother Marie Guyard*

exemplary attitudes of respectful attention, and seem to be responding with some uncertainty to the doctrinal questions proposed to them. This historic tree, the last of all its companions, was destroyed by a tempest in 1867. "What sentiments of joy and satisfaction must have welled up in her soul," exclaims her biographer, "as she sat there casting her eyes about on all that surrounded her! Finally beholding the entire fulfilment of all her desires; this savage country open to her ministrations, these cherished pupils, and above all this beautiful school arising from the bosom of the forest!"

But one night's disaster changed this peaceful contentment into perplexity and distress, and swept away in less than an hour the result of many years of labor and sacrifice.

Toward midnight of December 29, 1650, there suddenly rose upon the still night air

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the cry of "Fire! fire!" Then there was a vision of women running hither and thither, to the belfry to ring the great bell and summon aid, to the well to get water, to the rescue of the little Indians. But their efforts to extinguish the fire and save the seminary were in vain, and the only satisfaction they had when it was over, was that they had all escaped with their lives. Mother Guyard, by endangering her life and resorting to the most hazardous expedients, finally being compelled to escape through the belfry, succeeded in saving some of the valuable manuscripts of the seminary and a few articles of clothing.

The Huron tribes living in the vicinity were among the first to show their sympathy in this misfortune. Having nothing left of all their possessions but two wampum belts of twelve hundred beads each, they offered Mother Marie and her associates these with the following address by the chief:—

## *Mother Marie Guyard*

“Holy sisters, you see before you poor skeletons, the remnants of a nation which once flourished, but is now no more. In the Huron country we were devoured and gnawed even to our bones by famine and war. These skeletons could not stand up were it not for you. You learned through letters to what extremities we were reduced, but now you can see it with your own eyes. Look at us, and see if we have not enough to make us weep over ourselves, and to shed ceaseless torrents of tears. Alas! this sad misfortune which has overtaken you renews our own troubles, and again causes the tears to flow which had begun to be dried up. Must fire, then, follow us wherever we go? Let us weep, let us weep, my dear countrymen, yea, weep over our miseries, especially those we have in common with these innocent virgins. Behold yourselves reduced, holy sisters, to the same miseries as your poor Hurons, for whom you felt such compassion. Behold yourselves without a country, without a home, without food, and without succor, save from Heaven, which never loses you from sight.

“To strengthen your courage, here is a present of twelve hundred beads of porcelain, which will sink your feet so far down into the soil of this

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land that neither love of kindred nor of country will be able to draw them out of it. The second present that we pray you to accept is a similar necklace of twelve hundred beads of porcelain, to lay anew the foundation of your building, where you will continue to instruct our little Huron girls. Such are our vows, such also are yours, for you could not die content, if, dying, you were to reproach yourselves that for a too tender love of kindred, you had not aided in the salvation of so many souls. Yea, you will gather them together again, you will teach them to love God, and they will one day be your crown in heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

This eloquent address of the Huron chief was responded to by Mother Marie Guyard, who assured him that she and her sisters would continue to instruct their children, that no disaster, however serious, would ever send them back to France, and that, having spent their lives in this land of Canada, one

<sup>1</sup> This entire address, of which the above is only an extract, may be found in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1651. It is a curious fact that the descendants of this tribe may be seen to-day in the little village of Lorette near Quebec, still basking in the friendship and protection of the French Canadians.

### *Mother Marie Guyard*

day their bones would all repose there together.

The Hospitalières gave the homeless seminary women shelter for three weeks, after which they removed with their pupils to the newly built house of Madame de la Peltrie. Here they found themselves in almost as narrow quarters as they were when they first arrived in Canada. They were without even the bare necessities of life, and the ships bringing the usual supplies were not due from France for several months. All the inhabitants of the town, however, rallied to their help. The missionaries presented them with cloth they had in reserve for their gowns, the governor supplied them almost entirely with food, and even the poor Indians brought their offerings: one a piece of linen, another an old cloak, another a fowl or a few eggs,—in truth, almost anything that could be spared.

The prospect of rebuilding the school was

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a dark one, but the heart of the woman at the head of it was not cast down. Seeing no other hope of more commodious quarters, and having no money to hire laborers, she herself, followed by her associates, set to work to clear away the débris and begin the excavation for a new building. Slowly arose the new edifice, and a year passed before it was ready for occupancy. It was dedicated in May, 1652.

About this time the whole colony was thrown into a state of apprehension through a threatened attack of the Iroquois. It was reported that twelve hundred of them were on the war-path and were hastening down to Quebec on both banks of the St. Lawrence. This news was brought to the people while they were assembled in the chapel of the new seminary, celebrating a church holiday. No sooner was it received than they decided to convert the seminary into a fort, and the women were straightway ordered to abandon

### *Mother Marie Guyard*

it and take refuge in the house of the missionaries, where many of the inhabitants also resorted for protection, while others sought safety in the old fort. Mother Marie remained in the seminary with three of her assistants, furnishing munitions to the soldiers, preparing their food, and keeping an eye on the preservation of the building. Besides the twenty-four men who surrounded it, it was protected by a guard more redoubtable to the foe, twelve enormous bloodhounds which could scent the redskins with unerring fidelity. At the slightest alarm they would jump to their feet, and with bristling hair and flaming eyes eagerly sniff the air and utter low growls as a signal of danger.

The siege, which lasted five months, cannot be described in detail here. At last two Huron prisoners, who had miraculously escaped from the hands of the enemy, brought the news of the brave attack of

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Dollard, a young hero of Montreal, for this city had also been besieged, and the successful rout of the defeated foe.

Then another cloud loomed up in the horizon of the colony, compared with which the enmity of the Iroquois, who continued at intervals to harass the French settlers, was only a shadow. It is pictured in darker colors by the religious historians of the times, who attribute to it all the disasters which followed for the next five years.

In 1661 there came to Quebec as governor a sturdy old soldier, the Baron Dubois d'Avaugour. He wrote to the government at home a few emphatic letters, badly spelled and scantily worded, about the chaotic condition of the colony, indirectly and covertly attributing the failure of many enterprises to the religious party in Quebec. He ignored this element from the very beginning of his administration. On his arrival there, instead of going to the little chapel and performing

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his devotions, or standing sponsor to some newly baptized Indian, as the other governors had done, he proceeded straightway up the ramparts to examine into the condition of the fort.

Soon after his arrival a woman was found guilty of selling brandy to an Indian, an act which was strictly against the law, but which was surreptitiously indulged in by many of the colonists. One of the missionaries attempted to intercede for her with the governor, asking that the usual severe sentence for this offence be commuted, on the plea that she was a woman. This attempt at condoning a violation of the law so enraged the doughty governor that, in a spirit of retaliation, he nullified all previous prohibitions and licensed a free sale of liquor throughout the colony.

This step proved to be a disastrous one, for the Indians, savage and treacherous enough when sober, became raging demons

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when intoxicated. It was no sooner put into execution than the colony was thrown into indescribable confusion. The Indian women as well as the men drank freely and ran about naked, brandishing their swords and other weapons, and driving everybody before them. Day and night they haunted the public places of Quebec, no one daring to oppose them. Murders, acts of violence, monstrous and unheard of brutalities, were the results of this unlimited supply of fire-water.

“ I have told you in another letter,” wrote Mother Marie to her son, “ about a cross that is far harder to bear than the incursions of the Iroquois. There are in this country certain Frenchmen, so despicable and so little touched by the fear of God that they are ruining all our new Christians by giving them strong drink, such as wine and brandy, to get their beaver skins from them.” The same sentiment is expressed by a letter of

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one of the missionaries to a friend in France. "My ink is not black enough," he said, "to paint these misfortunes in their true colors. One would have to have the gall of a dragon to set down here the bitterness we have experienced from this terrible evil. It is all told when I say that we are losing in one month the sweat and labor of twenty years."

But no threats or prayers would avail with the obstinate governor, and the evil was allowed to take its course, leaving the inhabitants of the little colony in constant apprehension from the tomahawks of the drunken savages, and the missionaries in despair as to the ultimate destination of their souls.

And as though these earthly troubles were not enough, the minds of the simple colonists began to be disturbed about this time by the appearance of strange phenomena in the heavens. These were the forerunners of the great earthquake of 1663. As the shocks

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became more frequent, they began to think the end of the world had come. Women fainted, men fell with their faces to the earth, beating their breasts in despair, or raising their hands to heaven and imploring the mercy of God, believing every instant that the earth was about to open and swallow them up. Many ran to the churches and threw themselves before the altars, often spending the whole night there. So great was the general consternation that one of the missionaries, as he naïvely related to Mother Marie afterwards, during one of these nights heard no less than six hundred confessions.

These convulsions of nature continued for seven months and resulted in important changes in the surface of the country. Mountains disappeared, and others were suddenly raised up. Whole forests were thrown down or engulfed in lakes opened up in one day. A new island arose in the

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St. Lawrence, and the courses of several rivers were turned.

It was said that the only one of all the colonists who remained calm and imperturbable during this awesome period was Mother Marie of the Incarnation. "She alone remained firm and secure," says her biographer, "with an abandon and presence of mind capable of exciting the admiration of the angels themselves." When the terrible and awe-inspiring phenomena began to subside she attributed it piously to the fact that the savages were becoming penitent. Whether the change in them was due to their superstitious fear of all strange phenomena in nature, or to the fact that they could no longer procure fire-water, cannot be stated, but it was very evident that they in truth had become sober and reasonable. Through the instigation of the clerical power a new governor had been appointed to supersede D'Avaugour, and restrictions

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were again placed upon the sale of liquor to the Indians. Canada at this time became a royal province, and the new viceroy brought thither in 1665 that military body known in Canadian history as the Carignan regiment, not only to protect the people from the savages and to enforce the laws in the colony, but also to people the country.

The object of these philanthropic French women in crossing the ocean and taking up their residence on the desolate heights of Quebec, was, as has been said, to educate Indian girls, convert them to the Christian faith, and then send them out as civilizing factors among their fellow-savages. The failure of this mission has already been shown in the life of Madame de la Peltrie. The Indian girls came to their school; they were docile and intelligent, took delight in imitating the gentle manners and courtesies of their benefactresses. But they still re-

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mained savages, and no sooner found themselves among their own kindred again than they resumed all their savage customs, and in a short time had forgotten or discarded those principles of civilization which had been instilled into them with such labor.

Mother Marie Guyard had not been long in New France before she realized the futility of their efforts. "It is easier for a Frenchman to become a savage," she says, "than for a savage to adopt the customs of civilized nations." She acknowledged, thirty years after the opening of the seminary, that out of the great number of Indian girls instructed in it not more than a hundred had remained constant.

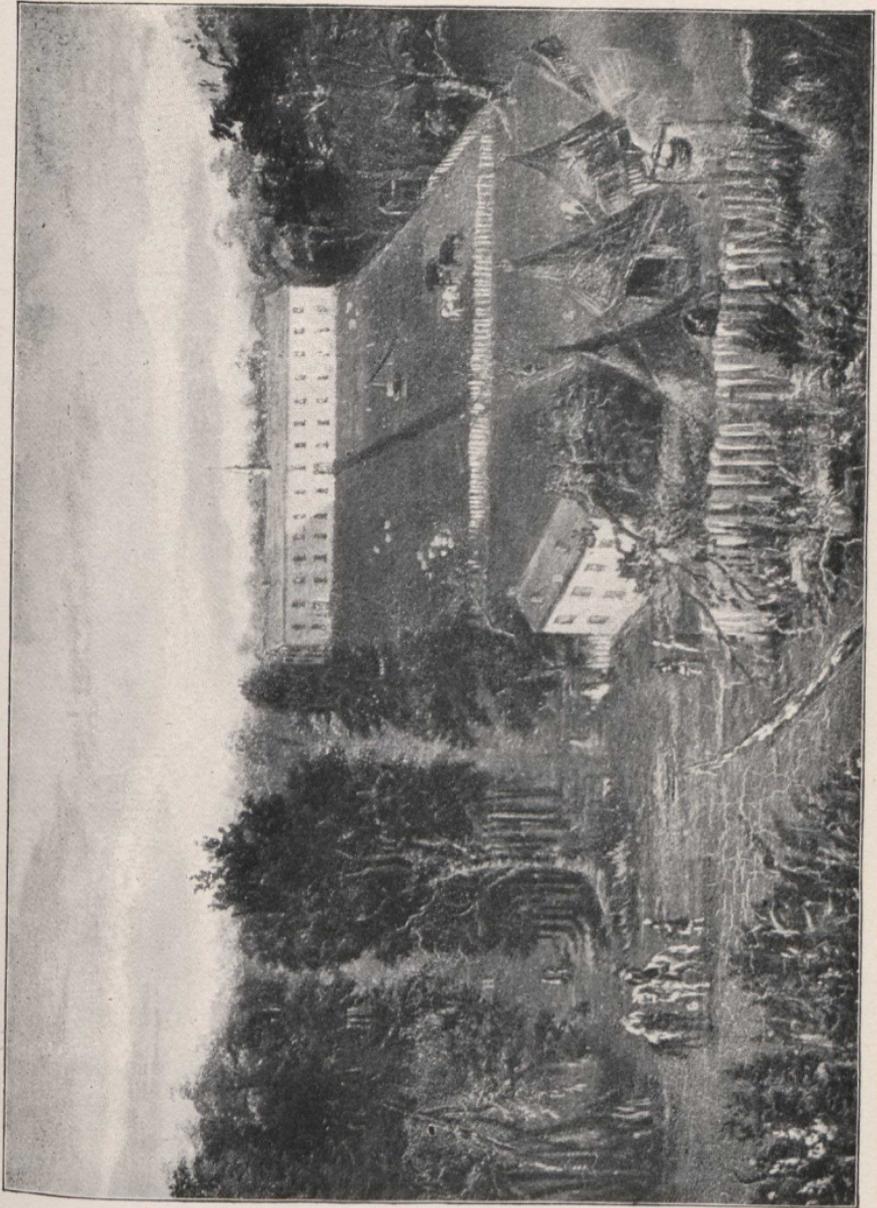
But the school did not want for pupils. There were the daughters of the colony to be educated, poor as well as rich. The former, however lowly their condition, were obliged to go at least a few months of the year; while many of the daughters of the

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well-to-do traders and government officers were placed in the seminary at the early age of six and remained there until they were fifteen or sixteen. And to-day a magnificent pile of buildings erected on the same spot as that chosen by Mother Marie in 1641 stands as a lasting monument to her courage and perseverance. She became an invalid in the latter part of her life, and much of her time was passed in painting and embroidery, for which she is said to have had an exquisite taste, as well as for the arts of sculpture and architecture. She was teacher and interpreter of the Indian languages, and in her later years compiled two immense dictionaries of the Algonquin tongue, as well as a translation of the Catechism and the Scriptures into Algonquin. She died on the 30th of April, 1672.

Before leaving these two women in the background of Quebec's earliest pioneer days, let us turn our footsteps for a mo-

*Ursuline Convent.*



## *Mother Marie Guyard*

ment to the scene of their labors. Among the historic edifices of the old city none is of greater interest than the seminary on Parloir Street. It is a long, irregular pile of buildings, extending over several acres on one of the most beautiful sites of the Upper Town. Mother Marie Guyard's twentieth-century successor in this now famous institution, a delicate little lady of more than fourscore years, meets the visitor at the small iron grating and talks pleasantly of the many interesting features of the place. The picture is shown wherein is represented, in harsh outlines and lurid colors, the original seminary with Madame de la Peltrie's house in the foreground, while in the dense forest in the rear is conspicuous the hoary ash under which Mother Marie sat and taught the daughters of the red-skins Christianity and civilization. The historic events of later times are also commemorated here, for in the

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chapel of this seminary lie the bones of General Montcalm, his skull, for greater security, being kept in the apartments of the chaplain.

Let us cast our eyes over the seminary garden, visible from the windows of our hotel. Every known vegetable seems to be growing there, — not only growing, but luxuriating, and promising many a savory *potage* for the gentle ladies' winter dinners. One parterre is devoted to flowers, gorgeous midsummer blossoms, hollyhocks, sunflowers, asters, dahlias, phlox, and geraniums. In a small rustic bower sit several black-robed sisters, telling their beads or engaged in meditation. Are their thoughts flitting back, perchance, over the long lapse of years to the primitive beginnings of the institution? Do they see, in their imagination, those fair lilies of France transplanted here and shedding their beauty and fragrance over the primeval growths of the

*Mother Marie Guyard*

forest? The gray silence within the stone walls answers not, and with a sigh at the forgetfulness and ingratitude of posterity we turn away to other curious landmarks in the quaint old city.

## V

### SOME DAINTY NURSES OF LONG AGO

I HAVE spoken of other women who came to New France in the ship that brought Madame de la Peltrie and Marie Guyard. These were three hospital nurses sent by a wealthy lady of France, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, niece and heiress of Cardinal Richelieu.

Left a widow when very young, and satiated with the frivolous life of the Court, for she, too, was lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie de Médicis, she resolved to devote herself to works of benevolence. The letters of Le Jeune had fallen into her hands also, for they had found their way into the boudoirs of princesses, and were passed from hand to hand at Court until they were fairly

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

worn out with using. After perusing that one of 1635 with absorbing interest, she resolved to establish a hospital in New France which should be open alike to Indians and French, rich and poor, young and old. This was the now well-known Hôtel-Dieu of Quebec, the first hospital in Canada. It was founded by this generous lady in 1639 and was maintained at her expense for thirty-five years.

The vicissitudes, changes, trials, and progress of this institution are in many respects similar to those of the seminary, and it is therefore needless to give a detailed account of them here.

Hardly had it been inaugurated in an old store-room of the Fur Company, when an epidemic which caused great havoc in the colony broke out among the Indians of the surrounding country and struck down hundreds in its fearful ravages. Here was the opportunity for the imported nurses to

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gather in the sick and dying and show the superiority of scientific treatment of disease over the simple herb medicines of the Indians ; but instead of establishing this fact, the experiment proved a disastrous failure. Nearly all the patients died, and the hospital came to be looked upon with horror by the red men, who gave it the name of the "House of Death." The air of the narrow rooms into which the sick were crowded like cattle was so impregnated with foulness, the medicines were so little adapted to the needs of these children of the air and forests, the resources were so limited, that the wonder is the nurses did not give up the attempt in despair and return to France by the first ship. But their courage was dauntless, and they persevered until a time when better success awaited them.

Not long after their arrival they saw the necessity of changing their white habits for a color more obscure, as in the rough labor

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

they were obliged to perform in their daily association with the savages, the gowns soon became soiled and unseemly. It was a matter of such importance that they decided to seek the advice of their friends, the Jesuit friars. It is curious to observe the brotherly, not to say motherly interest these missionaries took in the welfare of their countrywomen, whose unprotected condition in the midst of barbarians appealed to their innate chivalry. However, it may be said in passing that there is no record of anything on the part of the Indian men towards these French gentlewomen except the most chivalrous acts of kindness; after they had ceased wondering why they had not brought their "men" with them over the sea, they gave them the name of the "holy sisters" and accepted their ministrations with gratitude and reverence.

The missionaries and nuns lived on friendly terms with one another, the latter

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looking up to the former as their confessors and spiritual advisers, yet not infrequently indulging in a little gentle raillery at their expense. Sometimes they would refer demurely to the elegance of the missionaries' gowns, patched with pieces of leather, scraps of old blankets, etc., and at other times listen with pretended horror to the subterfuges they described as necessary in the conversion of the savages, such as dosing them with sweetened water in lieu of medicine, and occasionally dropping it upon the brow of a dying child to baptize it, or surreptitiously making the sign of the cross over it while pretending to feel its pulse.

Upon being consulted by the nurses as to the advisability of changing the color of their habits, the friars gave it as their unanimous opinion that another color, gray or black, should be adopted, as they had observed that the white habit, however clean and attractive in the morning, inevitably became soiled before

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

the day was ended; nor was it well for the women to spend much time at the wash-tub.

The nurses rebelled a little against this advice, and did not follow it immediately; for there was no material for new garments, and it was long before the ships from France would bring them the yearly supplies. Again the solicitude of the friars urged them on, suggesting a dye of walnut bark which would make the cloth the required color, and could be procured in the neighboring forest. The solution was made, the women sorrowfully plunged their garments into it, and they came out the desirable mud color. It was with rueful faces and many a little shrug of disgust that they saw themselves clad in these chimney sweeps' clothes, as they called them. For although these gentle ladies were ready to sacrifice all the other refinements of civilized life to the barbarians, they could not give up their cherished costume without protests. In a

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

few years, when they had removed to more commodious quarters, and when they were able to hire servants to perform the menial duties of the institution, they resumed the white habit.

Occasionally, recruits would be sent over from France to share their labors. These were so filled, with enthusiasm over their great vocation that they were not dismayed by the disillusionments that met them almost before they set foot upon the soil of the New World, but accepted them heroically and without complaint. But there was one young girl whom homesickness and despair so completely overpowered that she eventually had to be sent back to France. This was Marie Irwin, a French refugee, who belonged to a noble family of Scotland.

Her origin was traced back to no less illustrious a person than Mary, Queen of Scots. Young and inexperienced, she had not formed a just idea of the hard and prac-

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

tical life led by pioneers in a new country. When she found herself shut up in an isolated building (for the first few years of its existence the hospital was at Sillery, several miles from Quebec), with nothing else to look out upon but the black wall of the interminable forest, the majestic river with naked savages stealing silently along its banks, no other recreation than prayers and catechism and the homely and oft repugnant duties of the hospital, no other visits than the rare ones of black-robed priests and hideously painted barbarians, her heart was filled with despair. Her companions tried in vain to distract her by lively conversation and long walks; she wanted but one thing, and that was to return to France.

Her wish was gratified, and in the spring of 1643 she again found herself in her native land. But she was not there long before she began to sigh for the life she had just abandoned. Once more she crossed the sea

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

to Quebec and took up her work in the hospital, where she became one of the most efficient workers. She died in the land of her exile at an advanced age.

Catherine Chevalier was an obscure maiden who had followed the nurses to Canada, declaring meekly that she would be content if, after ten years of trial, she should be received in the institution as an assistant. But her excessive zeal deranged her reason. It is related that every time her duties called her into the yard and she met one of the chickens, she looked into the simple creature's eyes and asked it if it loved God. Receiving no reply, the frightened fowl would be chased round and round by the frantic girl, bent on killing it, for she declared that any living creature that did not love God deserved to die. Her reason was finally restored, and she also became a useful worker in the hospital.

There was in these early days a wealthy

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

lady of Quebec, also associated with the founding of Montreal, of whom the colony preserves a grateful memory. This was Madame d'Ailleboust, who came over to New France in 1643 with her husband, who became its third governor. She was one of the patronesses and most earnest workers of the hospital. It is said she shed such gentle tears of humility and repentance that they did not even redden her eyes. She became blind, but some miracle soon restored her vision. Such were her aspirations to martyrdom that for months she allowed herself to be tormented by a fractious maid to cultivate a befitting humility and patience. She often had visions in which the body became transparent, and she could see the hearts of sainted persons whom she knew. When she died she willed to the hospital all her property, which made it independent for some time to come, for her possessions were great both in New France and in Old.

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In 1665, twenty-six years after the foundation of the hospital, the nurses were called upon to minister to many of the soldiers of the Carignan regiment, whose arrival in Quebec was to inaugurate an era of prosperity and comparative safety for the colonists. These men brought with them an infectious disease, and the hospital was obliged to receive over a hundred of them in one day. The nurses not only devoted themselves to the care of their patients' bodies, but also looked sedulously after the welfare of their souls. The Huguenots, who were quite numerous among these soldiers, gave them especial concern. To see them die without abjuring their faith was one of the greatest trials these women were called upon to endure. But there is related one case in which they were spared this trial, for the erring Huguenot, through a shrewd device of one of the nurses, was led to accept the faith of the country.

### *Some Dainty Nurses of Long Ago*

If the tourist of to-day who visits the Hôtel-Dieu at Quebec be granted the rare privilege of seeing the relics of the martyrs, Brebœuf and Lalemant, who were burned at the stake by the Iroquois, he may perchance recall this miracle of long ago. Unknown to the soldier, who had declared he would die before he would give up his religion, the nurse mixed a pulverized bit of one of Brebœuf's bones in the medicine, with the gentle admonition to drink it to the dregs. Hardly had the refractory patient swallowed the potion than a miracle ensued. He became as gentle as a lamb, and asked to be instructed in the new faith, soon afterwards publicly abjured his own, and not only, says the historian, gained the health of his soul, but recovered that of his body.

Many instances of the civilizing influences of the hospital nurses among the savages of the surrounding country might be related, but I have already dwelt long enough on

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

these pioneer philanthropists of Quebec. Before leaving the historic Hotel-Dieu, let us view yonder portrait of the Duchess d'Aiguillon, its foundress. There sits, with her hand resting upon a table, the figure of a beautiful woman. It is clad in a tight-fitting, low-necked bodice and scant skirt of a rich and beautifully tinted texture. From a graceful head-dress looks out upon us benignantly a noble, intelligent face, full of purpose and determination. Near by, on the same wall, is the portrait of her uncle, Cardinal Richelieu. There are many other time-stained canvases in this and other rooms of the hospital, but we can tarry no longer to examine them, for the sails are spread and the gentle breeze lures us onward to the great city of Jacques Cartier's dreams. Here there is another group of women equally as worthy our attention and interest as those of Quebec.

*Duchesse d'Aiguillon.*



## THIRD PERIOD

### *MAIDS OF MONTREAL*

#### I

#### THE FOUNDING OF MONTREAL

**T**HE traveller who visits Montreal for the first time, and who has read the absorbing story of its founding, feels that he is treading on consecrated ground. From the summit of the sloping mountain, a mount royal indeed, he looks down upon the great metropolis with its stone towers pointing skyward, its sumptuous public buildings, its innumerable commemorative monuments, its busy streets and stately churches. As he comes down the eastern slope of the mountain, he will see a spacious pile of stone buildings surmounted by a

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

great dome. This is the historic Hôtel-Dieu. Let him pass through the gateway, up the broad flight of steps, and into the long corridor.

Facing him as he enters the door is a portrait of the foundress, Jeanne Mance. The face is long and delicate, with fine and regular features, clear, large dark eyes, long straight nose, curly hair escaping from the closely fitting cap, and a dimpled chin. A short, scant cape is pinned around the shoulders, and the face, looking downward, has a pensive expression that reminds the spectator of the famous Cenci portrait in the Barberini Palace at Rome.

The story of this pioneer woman's life, with that of others who will be mentioned, is the story of the founding of Montreal. Let us follow their fortunes for awhile, accepting their divine inspirations unquestioningly, as they did, that we may give them our sympathy in their struggles to establish

## *The Founding of Montreal*

a Christian commonwealth in the midst of a savage infected forest.

A Sulpician priest of Paris, Monsieur Olier, and a prosperous tax-gatherer of Anjou, Jerome le Royer de la Dauversière, were the first to conceive the idea of founding the great city now known as Montreal. These two individuals, living in different parts of the country, were separately inspired, at about the same time, to establish a religious colony in New France. They met one day at Meudon, near Paris, as if by a miracle, ecstatically embraced like old friends, called each other by name and took a walk in the forest near by to communicate the details of their visions and to suggest plans for their fulfilment.

The natural advantages of the place chosen for the settlement, as shown by one of Champlain's old charts, were dwelt upon largely. It was situated at the junction of two great rivers, the Ottawa and the St.

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

Lawrence, down both of which the Indians to be converted through their ministrations brought furs to the trading posts. This place was also the most frontier post in all Canada, and the one most exposed to attacks from the hostile Iroquois. But this feature was passed over lightly by the two enthusiasts, for their visions did not include a handful of defenceless settlers suffering unspeakable tortures at the hands of their savage captors; of almost daily penitential processions to the top of the mountain to ask for succor; of vows and offerings and castigations to invite the favor of Heaven; of their shrieking countrywomen suffering nameless horrors from the hideous redskins, or being reduced to the last extremities through cold, hunger, and exposure; of the jealousy and strife of those high in office. But had their prophetic visions made known to them these direful trials, which had to be endured by the Montreal colony in the first

## *The Founding of Montreal*

thirty years of its existence, it would, I think, have made little difference in the founders' plans; for there was a comfortable phrase bandied about in those days to the effect that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. The two devotees, sauntering through the woods that afternoon, dwelt long and pleasantly on their mutual inspirations, and concluded the interview by regretting that they, too, could not take part in this pious pilgrimage, but, like Moses, must view the promised land from afar.

A company was soon formed in France, composed of forty-five devout men and women, to be the patrons of the colony, which was to be consecrated to the Holy Family and to be called Ville Marie de Montreal. To act as its governor and as the representative of the association, a Christian knight and soldier was selected, Paul de Chomedey, the Sieur de Maisonneuve,

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

who, in the same miraculous manner in which all concerned in this enterprise appear, steps forth "with a sword in one hand and a psalter in the other" and makes known his willingness to assume the position of chief of the colony.

In the spring of 1641 Maisonneuve and a small group of strong and courageous men gathered at Rochelle to sail for New France. But on the very eve of their departure they perceived that they needed an important addition to the company,—a need which all their money could not supply. This was a prudent and intelligent woman, of a courage equal to all emergencies and a strong will, who would follow them into the country to take care of their goods and of their various furnitures, and at the same time would serve as nurse to the sick and wounded. Already, unknown to them, this necessity had been provided for.

At this time Jeanne Mance, daughter of

### *The Founding of Montreal*

an honorable merchant of Nogent-le-Roi, was thirty-five years old. Her father, whose closing years she had attended with a filial solicitude, had been dead a year, and she was now casting about to see by what means she could put into execution her determination, taken long since, to cross over to New France and to engage in the good work of a pioneer, whatever form it might assume. She had not heard of the new colony of Montreal, but one of Le Jeune's letters had found its way into her hands, and she, like other devout ladies of France, was fired with ambition to minister in some way to these New World barbarians. It would take too long to describe in detail the events which led up to her final success in carrying out her determination. The most efficient instrument in the undertaking was a rich and pious widow, Madame Bullion, who, on condition that her name be kept secret, gave liberally for the founda-

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

tion of a hospital, of which Mademoiselle Mance was to be directress.

After a tedious voyage across the Atlantic the new company arrived at Quebec in August, 1641. The lateness of the season caused them to abandon the hope of reaching Montreal that year, and they were obliged to spend the winter at Quebec. They proved to be both unexpected and unwelcome guests to the Quebec colony. The coldness of this Canadian winter hardly equalled that which gradually sprang up between the two rival governors, Montmagny of Quebec and Maisonneuve of the new colony. The older colony acted with jealousy and envy towards this new, well-fitted-out and moneyed company. One of the Quebec missionaries wrote in his journal of 1641 that the Montreal associates would not get to their destination that year, adding piously, "and God grant that the Iroquois do not prevent their getting there next!"

## *The Founding of Montreal*

Maisonneuve was constantly besought by the chief men of Quebec to abandon the expedition, the difficulties of it being depicted in grewsome colors, and to remain at Quebec, or form a new settlement on the Island of Orleans near by. At last the exasperated Maisonneuve exclaimed, "Gentlemen, I have not come here to parley, but to act. It is my duty and my honor to form a colony at Montreal, and I would go if every tree were an Iroquois!"

And go he did. On the 8th of May, 1642, he and his companions, with the unexpected addition of Madame de la Peltrie, with her servant and her furniture, started with a flat-bottomed sail-boat and two row-boats up the beautiful St. Lawrence River. There was a background of green trees, spring flowers were blooming, and brilliant song-birds were filling the air with melody. Ten days later they sprang ashore, and joined their songs with those of the happy

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

birds. Darkness came on, an altar was erected, festoons of glittering fireflies were hung upon it by the graceful Madame de la Peltrie and her companions, and the priest raised his hand in blessing. "You are a grain of mustard seed," said he, "that shall rise and grow until its branches overshadow the earth. You are few, but your work is the work of God. His smile is on you, and your children shall fill the land." Such was the auspicious beginning of Montreal.

The life of the new-born colony went on peacefully for a period, the first serious misfortune that threatened it being the overflow of the St. Lawrence in the following December. The people were powerless to protect the settlement from the threatened flood, and in their despair resorted to prayer. The governor, taking a cross in his hand, advanced towards the approaching waters and in a solemn voice made a vow to place a cross on the summit of the mountain if the

*The First Mass at Montreal.*



## *The Founding of Montreal*

flood would spare the town. But on came the surging, tumultuous waters, on to the very edge of the powder magazine, then paused as if stayed by the power of that upraised cross, turned and sullenly receded. The town was saved, and in pursuance of his vow Maisonneuve at once proceeded to plant the cross on the top of the mountain. A path was cleared, and with suitable ceremonies a procession started to make the ascent up the gentle slope, Maisonneuve carrying the heavy cross on his shoulders. At last the top was gained, a religious ceremony was performed in which Jeanne Mance and the few other women of the colony devoutly took part, and the great cross was planted, the first ever placed on Mount Royal.

As month followed month and idyllic peace prevailed in the little settlement, Mademoiselle Mance saw no patients and no prospect of any. Accordingly, she wrote to

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

her benefactress for permission to give the money intended for the endowment of the hospital to some needy Huron missions. Her request was met with a peremptory refusal. The word came back that the money must be used for a hospital and nothing else.

One day, through the treachery of some Huron fugitives, a band of wandering Iroquois was led to the Montreal settlement. They slipped stealthily up to the very gates of the fortifications, and seized six unsuspecting French settlers, who were hewing wood near the fort. Three of the men were killed outright, the others led away in triumph. One of the number afterwards escaped to the fort and related to the horrified inmates the harrowing story of the tortures and sufferings of his companions.

Soon after this an industrious young colonist, Monsieur Mercier, and his wife, Catherine, were working in their field near

## *The Founding of Montreal*

the fort when they were suddenly surrounded by six or eight Iroquois, who massacred the husband in a horrible manner and added his scalp to those of some Hurons they had recently despatched. Catherine's cries of distress brought three armed Frenchmen to her rescue, but, as the latter were about to carry her to safety, they suddenly found themselves attacked by forty more Iroquois who had been hiding in the forest. Seeing the impossibility of rescuing the woman, they rushed back through the gates of the fort and closed them just in time to prevent its being invested by the savages. Mademoiselle Mance, a horrified spectator of this scene, joined her shrieks to those of her unfortunate countrywoman, for she realized that nothing could be done to save her from the fate that awaited her. She was, in fact, burned to death by these barbarians after they had tortured her in various ways. The colonists could hear her appeals for help and the piti-

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

ful prayers uttered by her in the midst of her sufferings. Helpless as they were, they could only weep with her and wish her a speedy relief.

From this day Montreal was never without apprehensions from the Iroquois, a danger which was met with increased piety. Each house was placed under the protection of some saint, and the head of the family, with all the members of his household around him, at a certain hour every morning recited a fervent prayer for protection against the enemy. Many, too, were the individual petitions sent up to heaven by the terrified people. Each new arrival at the settlement seemed to outdo the others in pious practices, and if prayers alone would avail, the future of Montreal was safe. But many years of desolation and suffering still confronted it.

## II

### THE WORK OF JEANNE MANCE AND MARGUERITE BOURGEOIS

**W**ITH the Iroquois swarming to this point from all directions, Jeanne Mance did not dare to delay longer the building of the hospital. It was completed and ready for occupancy within the year 1644. Its object, as stated by the "unknown" benefactress herself, who by this time had succeeded in becoming very well known, was "to nourish, treat, and cure the poor sick people of the country and to have them instructed in the things necessary to their salvation."

These imposing buildings made a deep impression upon the friendly savages of the neighborhood. It was more than ever evi-

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

dent to them that their only safety from their hereditary foes, the Iroquois, lay in obtaining the good-will of these powerful palefaces, and thus find shelter with them in time of danger; although the pious writers of the day attribute this sudden attachment to their desire to be baptized and embrace the faith.

The conversion of one haughty chief particularly is recorded with much enthusiasm. Tessouat, or Le Borgne, as he was called by the French, came walking over the ice of the St. Lawrence one winter day and asked Maisonneuve to receive him at Montreal and to have him baptized, threatening that if they hesitated about granting this request, he would have the Black Robes of the Huron Mission baptize him. He was turned over to the good graces of Mademoiselle Mance, who could now speak the Huron tongue fluently, and she immediately proceeded to instruct him in the doctrines

### *The Work of Jeanne Mance*

of the Christian faith. When he was sufficiently familiar with the new creed, he was baptized, and soon became a model of piety to the others, spending whole nights preaching to his fellow-warriors the benefits of the Christian religion. He was married the day after his baptism, and was given a gun, some land, and two men to help him cultivate it. "Thus," says Jeanne Mance's biographer, in speaking of her share in this great event, "was the part of Clotilda, Ildegonda, and Radeconda in the conversion of her own native France recalled to the heart of the devoted young woman."

In the year 1643 an important addition to the colony was Monsieur Louis d'Ailleboust, afterwards Governor of New France, accompanied by his wife, who has been already referred to among the women of Quebec, and by his sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Philippine de Boullongne, both of whom proved of invaluable assistance to Jeanne Mance in

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

her work. They brought encouraging news from the Montreal associates in France, but also were intrusted with the peremptory command from the "unknown benefactress" to let nothing interfere with the work of the hospital.

Mademoiselle Philippine quickly worked her way into the hearts, not only of the French, but also of the friendly Indians. She soon learned to speak their language, and so completely won their confidence that she was once asked by an Indian maiden and her lover, to her embarrassment and confusion, to take the place of the absent priest and marry them in the presence of the whole settlement. Another time she was told by a burly chief that, much as he loved his tobacco and his squaw, he would willingly give them both up if she would consent to baptize him.

The Iroquois, since their discovery of the little colony, kept closing it in an ever nar-

### *The Work of Jeanne Mance*

rowing circle. They had been supplied with firearms by the Dutch of New York and were eager to try them on the hated pale-faces. The colonists had all been obliged to take refuge in the fort, whence they were afraid to venture out except in squads, well armed and protected by the faithful dogs brought over from France for this purpose. There was one in particular, named Pilot, which, with her little brood, saved Montreal from many unexpected attacks and massacres. She could scent the Iroquois a long distance, and taught her family to accompany her into the forest to search for redskins, biting them fiercely if they hesitated; or if a timid puppy, frightened at the moving shadows of the great forest, would sneak back to the fort, it would receive the same punishment on Pilot's return.

One March day in 1644, Pilot and the puppies came rushing into the fort, all barking furiously, telling the colonists as plainly

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

as they could that the enemy was nigh. The soldiers, crowding about Maisonneuve, whom they had chided for being too slow in attacking the enemy, asked him if they were never to have a chance to fight. He replied that he would lead them in an attack, and they could thus show if they were as brave as they would fain appear. Maisonneuve and thirty of his soldiers sallied forth, and proceeded some distance from the fort, preceded by the dogs; but they had followed these guides too closely, for instead of surprising the enemy, it was the enemy who surprised them.

Suddenly finding themselves surrounded by about eighty yelling savages, they began to retreat, although holding back the Indians by a continuous shower of bullets. Soon their ammunition was exhausted, and they turned about suddenly and fled precipitately to the fort, leaving Maisonneuve alone to face the enemy. With a pistol in each hand

*Figure of Jeanne Mance*



### *The Work of Jeanne Mance*

he kept the savages back, all the time retreating toward the fort. Finally, as the Indian chief rushed forward to grasp him, for they wished to take him alive, Maisonneuve raised his pistol and shot him through the heart. Dismayed by this calamity, the loyal barbarians turned from the panting Maisonneuve and rushed to carry away the body of their chief. Maisonneuve ran back to the fort in safety, and his brave defence was ever afterwards celebrated in the annals of Montreal. There is now in the Place d'Armes, the supposed spot where it took place, a statue of Maisonneuve surrounded by those of other heroic pioneers of Montreal, including Jeanne Mance.

It was seen from this incident, and others of the same character that followed, how much danger was incurred by the helpless settlement. Mademoiselle Mance devised a new expedient. Almost frightened at her own temerity, she went to Maisonneuve and

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

suggested that he go over to France and raise a company of soldiers to protect Montreal, offering him twenty thousand francs which had been given her by Madame Bullion to carry out this plan. "The hospital above all" was the watchword of this pious lady, but without a colony there could be no occasion for a hospital, and if the Iroquois incursions were not soon checked there would be no colony. In lieu of the money she asked and was given a large tract of land which, with soldiers and settlers brought over to cultivate and protect it, she reasoned would produce a better income than the money at interest. Thus fortified, Maison-neuve departed for France and was absent from Montreal for nearly two years.

In the mean time there was another fierce attack of the Iroquois, in which the settlers made a brave defence inspired by a valiant French soldier, Major Closse. Yet every victory left them weaker and less able to resist.

## *The Work of Jeanne Mance*

Mademoiselle Mance's hospital was found to be quite inadequate for all the wounded and dying that were brought into it. She had recourse again to her benefactress, who promptly sent her more funds; also complete furniture for the hospital and chapel, including carpets, mattresses, kitchen utensils, and above all, two oxen, three cows, and twenty sheep; so that they could henceforth have milk and wool, of which they had heretofore been sadly in need for their patients. All the domestic animals, except the horse, had now been introduced into New France. The horse was not brought over until 1663, and when the savages saw it for the first time they expressed great admiration for the "Frenchman's moose."

Jeanne Mance's life soon became identified with the vital interests of the colony, and all that one woman could do to draw order out of confusion, health out of sickness, happiness and tranquillity out of de-

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

spair, and civilization out of barbarism, she did. No discouragement daunted her. Frequent returns were made to the mother-country to bring new recruits and to raise funds wherewith to keep the colony from ruin. Madame Bullion continued her benefactions, finally making a gift of twenty thousand francs, the interest of which was to form the income of the hospital. This Mademoiselle Mance placed in the hands of Jerome de la Dauversière, who promised to invest it profitably and thus materially to increase their capital.

Let us go back a few years in imagination and visit the little village of Troyes in the province of Champagne. The Dominicans are celebrating the feast of the Holy Rosary, and Marguerite Bourgeois, a young woman of twenty, is walking in the procession with many of her friends and kinspeople. As the procession passes the church of Notre Dame, she glances at the statue of the Virgin,

### *The Work of Marguerite Bourgeois*

which stands on a pedestal within the church. Behold! it is shining brightly, and the face seems almost lifelike in its beauty. Her friends also glanced at the statue, but they saw nothing supernatural about it. If it looked brighter and fairer to them than on other days, they attributed the fact to the glowing October sun and the brilliant autumn tints that made all things resplendent with color and light.

But Marguerite was joining in a holy church ceremony, and her mind was attuned to mystic things. When she saw the Virgin beaming brightly in the glowing sunlight, she immediately considered it a call to devote herself to a life of good deeds. This field was soon opened up to her in the Canadian wilds, for, as we have seen, the conversion and education of the savages of New France was now agitating the European pulse. To baptize Indian babies, be tortured by big Indian braves, and then

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

ascend to heaven in a halo of blazing torches and painted savages was to woo saintship indeed. This fever came to Marguerite, as it did to other women already mentioned in these pages, and when the opportunity presented itself it was seized with avidity.

Monsieur Maisonneuve, while recruiting his company of soldiers in France, happened to pay a visit to his two sisters at Troyes. Here he was informed of Marguerite's desire to go to Canada. He gave her a letter to one of his friends at Nantes, a rich merchant whom he called Monsieur Coq, who was to furnish her transportation to Canada, and give her instructions. Disposing of her inheritance in favor of her brothers and sisters, she started for Nantes. Every step of her journey was beset with trials. She travelled alone with no luggage but her little bundle of linen, and, being thus friendless and poor, was treated as an adventuress by her travelling companions. At the inn at Orleans she

### *The Work of Marguerite Bourgeois*

was even refused shelter for the night and was obliged to accept the doubtful kindness of the coachman when he offered her his room. And it proved doubtful indeed, for she was obliged to barricade the door to prevent intrusion from him and his dissolute companions. In the morning early she stole away to resume her journey. She secured passage on a boat on the Loire which made a stop of a few days at Saumur, where she was again humiliated by being refused hospitality at a hostelry. But a kindly Samaritan took her in and kept her until the boat was ready to proceed on its journey.

Arrived at Nantes, she sought the merchant to whom Maisonneuve had recommended her. But her search was in vain, for no one had ever heard of such a person, as he was really known by the name of Monsieur de Bassoniers. Marguerite, weary and discouraged, with her little bundle of linen under her arm, travelled all day about the

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

streets of the strange city, inquiring for "Monsieur Coq, Monsieur Coq." At last, despairing and almost exhausted, she approached a big burly man and timidly asked him if he knew where such a gentleman lived. "Monsieur Coq — why, I am Monsieur Coq! And if I mistake not, you are the lady Monsieur Maisonneuve wrote me about a few days ago," and he cheerfully gave her his address and sent her to his house.

But if Monsieur Coq knew who she was, Madame Coq did not, and the latter was extremely indignant at her husband for sending her this strange young woman to entertain. "I will positively receive no such people into my house," she said, "you must depart forthwith!" And exhausted and almost fainting as she was, Marguerite turned and walked away. After wandering around awhile longer, she determined to appeal to Madame Coq again. And as

*The Work of Marguerite Bourgeois*

that lady was standing on the steps refusing her entrance and lecturing her on the impropriety of travelling about alone as she did, the lady's husband appeared. Explanations followed, and Marguerite was afterwards hospitably entertained during the three weeks she remained in Nantes until the departure of Monsieur Maisonneuve, whom she was to accompany to Canada. Their ship sailed in July and reached Quebec, September 22, 1653.

When she whom Parkman has eulogized as the "fair ideal of Christian womanhood, a flower of earth expanding in the rays of heaven," arrived in Canada, Montreal contained but about fifty houses. Maisonneuve had been absent two years; and when he returned with his hundred picked soldiers, the colonists were in a state of despair, fearing they would not be able to hold out a day longer against the ever-increasing forces of the enemy. In addition to his company of

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

soldiers, Maisonneuve brought another gift of money from the benefactress, which was utilized in fortifying the town. It was afterwards acknowledged by those versed in the affairs of Canada, that this money, given at such a critical time, saved Montreal, and, in truth, all of New France, from certain ruin.

When Marguerite began her work, there were only two children to benefit by her instruction, for all the others who had been born in the colony in the first ten years of its existence had succumbed to the rigors of the climate. However, fourteen marriages took place soon after her arrival, and there was soon a mission for her as a teacher of children. A close bond of friendship united her and the other "mother of Montreal," and these two women thereafter shared together the toils and privations of their pioneer life.

After Marguerite had been in Montreal four years, the number of her pupils in-

*Marguerite de Bourgeoys*



### *The Work of Marguerite Bourgeois*

creased so greatly that it was a loss of time to go about from house to house to teach them, and she conceived the idea of building a church and having her pupils gather there, that she might teach them all together. Was ever ambition more vaulting? Here was a woman without other possessions than the clothes she wore, inspired with the desire to build a church! She went to Maison-neuve and modestly stated her wishes. He generously gave her a tract of land, the only commodity that was not scarce in the New World. After many tedious and vexatious delays, the most serious of which came from an officious bishop, who had come to Montreal to build a school for boys and had never heard of the little woman who was teaching the girls, Marguerite at last succeeded in her undertaking. This edifice, called "Notre Dame de Bonsecours," was the first stone church erected in Montreal. It was destroyed by fire in 1754, but upon the

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

same spot was erected another which is now visited by tourists as one of the landmarks of the old city. It is a worthy monument to the inspired labors of one of Canada's pioneer women.

### III

## JUDITH DE BRESOLES AND HER COMPANIONS

**W**HILE Jeanne Mance and Marguerite Bourgeois were carrying on their labors in Montreal, other young women were being educated at a school at La Flèche, in France, under the supervision of Monsieur Dauversière, to lend them a helping hand. Early in 1659 the two "mothers of Montreal" revisited France, each for the purpose of seeking recruits for her particular work. Three of the young women at Dauversière's school had already been selected to accompany Jeanne Mance back to Canada. They were Catherine Macé, daughter of a rich merchant, Mademoiselle Maillet, and Judith de Bresoles, who had been in this school for

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seven years, studying chemistry and medicine. Marguerite Bourgeois too succeeded in getting three young teachers for her school in Montreal. Besides these, there was a small company of young women, the "king's girls," for whom Marguerite was to find husbands in New France.

The départure of the three girls from the school at La Flèche did not take place without serious difficulty. A widespread prejudice had arisen against the erratic Dauversière, who, with a family of sons and daughters at home, had taken it into his head to establish this school for young women. It was reported that he had stolen girls from the surrounding country and had either immured them in this institution for some mysterious purpose, or had sent them over to Canada to be sold as slaves. When it was learned that three of them were really about to depart for that distant country, the villagers were aroused, and many of them

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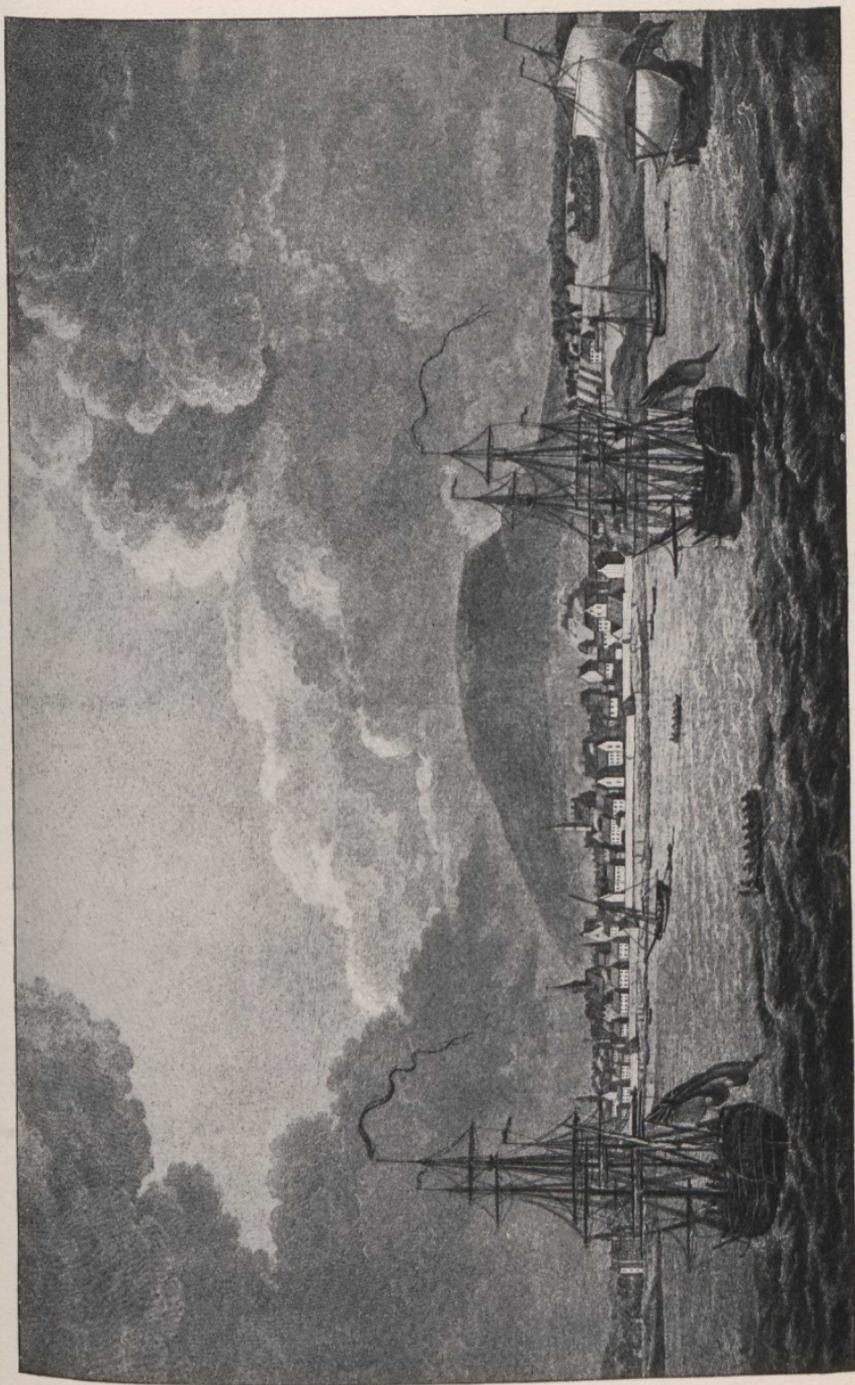
sat up all night and watched the building to see that none of its inmates issued from the gates. The next morning a company of soldiers protected the departure of Dauversière and his protégées, and with their gleaming swords awed into acquiescence the belligerent rustics, who, in truth, were greatly intimidated by this show of authority and attempted no further resistance.

Judith de Bresoles was the leading spirit of this little company of recruits. She belonged to a noble family of Blois, who surrounded her with all the advantages that wealth and position can secure. It is said that while her sister was diverting herself with the joys of childhood, playing with dolls and building block houses, little Judith was going about from house to house consoling and nursing the poor and teaching their children. When only fifteen years old she was capable of composing the most wonderful remedies, of mixing medicines and dress-

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ing wounds; the lancet of the surgeon had no terrors for her, and she could assist in the bleeding of a patient or the cutting off of a limb with equal fortitude. About this time she announced to her parents her intention of devoting her life to nursing the sick. When the philanthropic propensities of the delicately nurtured young girl began to assume this dangerous form, she was peremptorily commanded to renounce all these pursuits and to give her attention to the pastimes of her age and sex. Her prayers availed not to move her obdurate parents, and finally, with the aid of an old servant, she ran away from home and entered Dauversière's school. Her brother-in-law was one day visiting a hospital when he suddenly came upon the missing girl, who had heretofore eluded the search of her anxious relatives. She was entreated by them to return home, but turned a deaf ear to all their supplications. Seeing that further

*An East View of Montreal.*



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resistance on their part would prove futile, they finally gave their reluctant consent to her plan of going to Montreal.

Finally, the party for Canada completed, they all met at Rochelle to take ship. There was Marguerite Bourgeois, her three young women teachers, and her group of "king's girls," Jeanne Mance and the trio of girls from La Flèche, two Sulpician priests, and one hundred and ten colonists who were to settle at Montreal, besides two girls who were accompanying Mademoiselle Mance as servants in the hospital. But just as they were about to embark, the captain of the ship intervened and refused them passage. An ecclesiastic of Quebec, jealous of the growing importance of Montreal, had whispered into the captain's ear that this ambitious band of young women could not pay their passage across the sea. It was true that, after several months' delay in the mother country, their expenses had made

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serious havoc with their funds, and they now found themselves in a state of destitution that would have daunted less courageous souls. Jeanne Mance finally induced the shipmaster to take her and her companions on trust, giving as security the note of an honest merchant of Rochelle. Marguerite Bourgeois and her young women were equally as fortunate, for at the last moment a large sum of money was found sewed into the bodice of one of them, Mademoiselle Raisin, whose father had had the money placed there in lieu of the income the young girl was renouncing in leaving her native land. This magnanimous parent also generously offered to guarantee the fare of the other demoiselles. Saint Peter, too, was instrumental in the happy outcome of this affair, for it was on his day that the captain finally yielded to their entreaties.

On the 2d of July, 1659, the day of their departure, Dauversière appeared among them

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for the last time, for he was then suffering from a mortal disease, and proceeded to give them his final instructions and blessings. Mademoiselle Maillet, who acted as treasurer of Jeanne Mance's company, took this opportunity to ask him where she should apply for the interest of the twenty thousand francs, the "unknown's" latest gift, which had been placed in his hands for investment. A cloud passed over the brow of the pious gentleman, but he immediately regained his composure, and replied "with an assurance that could only come from heaven," "God will provide it, my child," and continued his conversation on the goodness of Divine Providence, assuring them that the Lord would watch over and protect them. A few months later he died of the gout, the second of the three founders of Montreal to pass away, the only one now living being Maisonneuve, the governor.

The journey across the Atlantic proved to

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be the most terrible ordeal that any of these pioneer women had ever had to pass through. The old ship, although designated enthusiastically by one of the Sulpicians "the cradle of the Holy Family," proved rather to be the cradle of all human misery. It had been a floating hospital, and was, therefore, a veritable home of infectious diseases. Mademoiselle Mance became very ill, and it was feared she would not live to see her exile home again. In addition to the ravages of the disease, she suffered intense agony from a crippled arm. She had broken it by a fall on the ice of the St. Lawrence, and as it had been wrongly set by the clumsy surgeon of Montreal, in this last visit to France she had had it treated by the best surgeons of Paris. No benefit resulted from this treatment; and in despair, while one day visiting the tomb of Monsieur Olier, one of the defunct founders of Montreal, she beheld a seraphic vision of this gentleman, and as

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instantaneously came the inspiration to ask this vision to restore to her the use of her paralyzed arm. She was given the box that contained Olier's heart, and placing it upon the withered arm, she immediately felt a warm glow thrill through it to the very finger-tips. Her hand regained its strength, and she found herself able to lift the heavy box with it. However, this arm, thus miraculously healed, is said to have caused her great suffering to the day of her death, and on this voyage added agonies to her other trials. She was so wasted away when the ship arrived at Quebec that she was obliged to remain there several weeks before she was able to proceed to Montreal.

Soon after her arrival there with the news of Dauversière's death came that of the loss of the twenty thousand francs' endowment for the hospital, for he had used it to pay his debts. There was now no fund with which to keep up the expenses of the institution,

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and Mademoiselle Mance and her associates were recalled to France. This blow came upon her with stunning force, for she saw in it an ignominious end to all her ambitious dreams. But her indomitable spirit was not thus to be overcome; in her extremity she appealed to the colonists for aid. Realizing what the return of these heroic women would mean to them in their struggles to gain a foothold in this savage land, they agreed unanimously to bear the expense of their maintenance until things took a more favorable turn. Their bounty immediately took shape in the form of roasted pumpkins and cakes of Indian meal. "By which means," says a gentle sister historian, thirty years later, "they were at least kept from starving to death."

They were lodged temporarily in an upper room which had to be reached by a ladder, and of which "poverty was the only ornament." During the long northern winter

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they suffered greatly from the cold, which was so intense that they were obliged to thaw out their bread before eating it, and to sweep out the snow which had accumulated in drifts through the cracks in the walls. Dauntless in their enthusiasm, they went on bravely in their work for the hospital. Judith de Bresoles developed a remarkable talent for making soups out of almost nothing, such as people had never tasted before. Dainty bits to satisfy the most capricious appetites were placed before the wondering patients, who considered their origin nothing less than divine. "This comes from the Infant Jesus, does it not?" asks a half-delirious bushranger, tasting with delight a dainty dish prepared by Judith's deft fingers. "From him indeed," she replies; "let us thank him together."

Catherine Macé and Mademoiselle Maillet found their happiness in performing the menial duties of the hospital, which were

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occasionally interrupted by supernatural visions. In one of these granted to Mademoiselle Maillet, the two defunct founders, Olier and Dauversière, appeared and assured her that this work would never perish, that all the tempests that assailed it would never uproot it from the soil in which it was planted like a rock, ending with the cheerful statement that poverty and suffering were necessary to its existence. The governor and other officers of the colony frequently visited them, and would often indulge in gentle raillery on the poverty of their surroundings. They once vied with one another in guessing the original color and material of the nurses' caps and gowns, the wildest guess suggesting silk, but the patches of cotton and leather which predominated making this conjecture doubtful. Thus the happy French nature of these exiles arose above all their pitiful trials.

After two years of this life of privation

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the condition of the hospital became more prosperous through various benefactions and endowments in France. But almost simultaneously with this improvement in their fortunes the Iroquois again swooped down upon them, and all peace of mind was for a time at an end. The almost defenceless settlers were thrown into a state of apprehension, for the prowling savages again began to infest the neighborhood and horrible massacres were of frequent occurrence. Mademoiselle Morin, a young woman who came over from France three years after the others, gives a vivid description of this period.

“We were daily confronted by the frightful spectacle of the tortures to which they (the Iroquois) subjected our neighbors and friends who happened to fall into their hands. All this gave us a horror of these barbarians which only those who have been in a like extremity can appreciate. For my part, death would have been preferable to a life involved in such dangers, and plunged into sym-

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pathy for the horrible sufferings inflicted upon our poor brothers.

“Every time our people were attacked, the tocsin sounded to summon the people to the rescue, and to warn those who were working in dangerous places to withdraw promptly, which each one did at the tap of the bell. My sister Bresoles and I ascended to the belfry that the man-servant might go out against the enemy. From this elevated place we often saw the conflict, which filled us with such fear that we ran down all trembling, believing our last hour had come. When the tocsin was sounded, my sister Maillet almost fainted from fear, and my sister Macé, all the time the alarm lasted, remained in a state of speechlessness pitiful to see. Both went to the chapel to prepare for death, or withdrew into their rooms. As soon as I learned that the Iroquois had withdrawn, I sent and told them, which seemed to comfort them and give them new life. My sister Bresoles was more courageous; fear, which she could not help but feel, did not prevent her from tending her sick and receiving those who were brought in wounded or dying.”

This siege of the Iroquois has already been referred to in the chapter on Mother

*The Death of Dollard.*



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Marie Guyard of Quebec. The hero Dolard and his sixteen young associates of Montreal freed the country from this scourge for a long time to come. But it was done at the cost of his own life and that of many of the best men of Montreal; among them, the two Sulpician priests who came over with the two mothers of Montreal on their last return from France; also the courageous Major Closse, who had for years defended the colony with great valor. "I only came over to Canada," said the dying man, "to die for God, serving him as a soldier, and would have left here and gone to fight the Turks rather than to be deprived of this glory."

Ten years more passed away, and Jeanne Mance too finished her course on earth. Her last years were full of suffering, but she was surrounded by faithful friends who, by their tender care and sympathy, soothed the passage of this heroic soul into eternity.

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She died in 1673, two years after Madame de la Peltrie and one after Mother Marie Guyard. Her work was well done. Montreal, now the great commercial centre of Canada, was founded, and the hospital or Hôtel-Dieu, the hope and inspiration of her life, was firmly established. Its numbers were augmented from year to year by recruits from France, and, as has been said already, after two centuries and a half of vicissitudes from fire, war, and famine, it may be seen to-day, on the same spot, one of the largest and most prominent buildings of Montreal.

The visible results of Marguerite Bourgeois' long life in Canada was the institution of a band of young women who were bound by vows to teach the young, the building of a church, and the establishment of schools for the instruction of Indian and French children. She died January 12, 1700. Her heart, which had beaten with pain at the cry of suffering childhood, with agony at

*Judith de Bresoles and Companions*

the shriek of the tortured victim of Iroquois cruelty, with shame at the contentions of Christian brotherhoods, and with rapture when even one little child received the anointing drops of baptism, — that heart, encased in its silver covering, now rests in the chapel of a convent where she so long labored and loved.

#### IV

### JEANNE LE BER

#### THE RECLUSE OF MONTREAL

**A**S the godchild of Jeanne Mance and the pupil and benefactress of Marguerite Bourgeois, it is fitting that the story of this strange girl's life should follow theirs. It was one long spiritual exaltation compared to which the pious zeal of the other women mentioned here seems almost like levity and indifference. While they were engaged in good works whose results have withstood the test of centuries, she was immured in a cell behind an altar making artificial flowers and embroidering church vestments, a few of which have survived the ravages of time and may be seen in a convent at Montreal. Yet she was one of the pioneer women of New

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

France, and her idiosyncrasies have impressed themselves so indelibly on the pages of history that no mention of the women of the early days of Montreal would be complete without her.

Her mother was one of those maids whom Marguerite Bourgeois had brought over from France, and had found a husband for, in Canada. This gentleman, Jacques Le Ber, became one of the richest and most widely known merchants in the Canadian country. His contentions with one of the corrupt governors of Montreal, Monsieur Perrot, are recorded minutely in the legal documents of the times. Le Ber was a straightforward and honest citizen, and the tricks resorted to by the unscrupulous governor to get furs from the Indians aroused his indignation and resulted in open enmity between them. He is described once as leading a party of indignant citizens to demand apologies from the governor, because

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the latter, having nothing left to trade a burly chief for some valuable skins except his clothes, had given him these with a plentiful supply of firewater, and the drunken savage was seen swaggering around the town all day in the governor's coat, sash, knee breeches, and buckled shoes.

Jeanne was eight years old in 1670, when Marguerite Bourgeois, who had instructed her up to that time, found it necessary to make one of her visits to France. Mother Marie Guyard, though old and feeble, was still the pervading spirit of the now well-established girls' seminary at Quebec, and Madame Le Ber, thinking it inexpedient to await Mademoiselle Bourgeois' uncertain return, sent Jeanne there to be educated. During the seven years that she remained at the seminary, the annals of the place are filled with her childish acts of penance and self-mortification. She was once given a cushion upon which to do her embroidery,

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

elaborately trimmed with ribbons and laces. She waited until the donor, a Quebec lady of rank who was a friend of her parents, had passed out of the door, then, picking up the dainty pillow, she ripped off all the lace and ribbons, and was about to throw them into the fire, when she was arrested by the indignant protest of an attendant. The ornaments were sewed on the cushion again, but the embroidery worked thereon was deluged by such a shower of tears from the offended child that it was finally decided to yield to her objections to this flummery and allow her to dispense with it. Owing to her high station in life, she always wore dresses of the finest material that could be brought from France, but she did so with an ill grace, expressing her preference for the homely and patched gowns of the charity pensioners.

She shrank from appearing in public and taking part in the little plays enacted in the school, "not because," says her biographer,

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“she was ungainly or awkward in her appearance, or of ungraceful speech.” On the contrary, she was graceful in the extreme, and spoke with a readiness and fluency that excited the admiration of all those who heard her, not only in childhood, but on the rare occasions in after life when she condescended to express her opinions. She never indulged in the dainties that were sent to her by the Quebec friends of her family, but generously presented them to her schoolmates, who were less scrupulous about indulging their mundane tastes for sweets, and accepted them without protest. Another peculiarity of this remarkable child was a love of solitude and silence, which prompted her to pass entire days without speaking except when called upon to recite her lessons. This brief glimpse into her character will be sufficient explanation of her withdrawal from the world,—a step which she early determined upon.

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

At fifteen she returned to Montreal to the spacious and beautiful home of her parents on St. Paul Street. Here, although there was an even more devotional spirit than in the other pious households of Montreal at this time, there were also enough worldly diversions and entertainments to attract a young girl. Distinguished persons were guests at this house, and Jeanne soon found herself surrounded by a coterie of Montreal's most brilliant and dashing youth. Her parents, anxious to have this, their only daughter, make a brilliant marriage and establish herself well in the country, soon chose from among them a suitable husband for her and signified their desire that she should receive the young man with favor. For although the pious tendencies of their daughter's mind were well known to them, they had no suspicion of the aspirations that were filling her young soul. It therefore came upon them like a thunderclap when

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

she repudiated the husband chosen for her, and unfolded her plan of passing all the rest of her life in seclusion, under her father's roof or wherever it might be most convenient. After mature reflection, the piety of the parents would not allow them to oppose this seemingly holy inspiration. They consented, therefore, to their daughter's making the experiment, but with the secret hope that it prove to be only a whim, and that in time she would not only be satisfied, but glad to give it up.

She immediately began her life of seclusion by immuring herself in a room in her father's house. Here she remained for fifteen years, beginning in the year 1680, without any communication with even the inmates of her own household, except through the mediation of the servant who attended her. She regarded herself as a victim, who was to expiate her own sins as well as those of the whole community. She

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covered her body with haircloth, and indulged in all the austerities of the most renowned candidates for sainthood. Her food was scanty and coarse, all delicacies which found their way to her room being left untouched. In fact, lest the ordinary food of the family might prove too acceptable to her palate, she had the attendant bring the crusts of bread left by the servants, which, with plenty of water, formed her diet for several days in succession. All communication with her parents and brothers was renounced, and she never crossed the threshold of her chamber except to attend church every morning at five o'clock. She went forth attended by her servant, her eyes cast down, her hands clasped upon her bosom, and after entering the little church would prostrate herself before the altar in silent adoration. But her confessor, the sole person she had bound herself to obey, finally requested her to give up this practice, for as

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piety was becoming less and less conspicuous in the country, this act might attract unfavorable comment.

When Mademoiselle Le Ber had been in her retreat two years, her mother died after a long illness. Although her daughter is said to have had the most filial attachment for this parent, the suffering woman's moans did not move her from her retreat. She refused all appeals to show herself at her mother's bedside, fulfilling her duty by praying for the future repose of her soul. The mother finally died without the solace of the daughter's presence. "This was the most poignant sorrow she had to endure," says the biographer, "and the one which pierced her heart most deeply. However, she bore this great trial with a strength worthy of her magnanimous courage."

After the loss of his wife, Monsieur Le Ber entreated his daughter earnestly to abandon her retreat and take her mother's place in

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

the now bereaved household. But she received his proposition in unrelenting silence. We can imagine the dreariness which now pervaded the home life of this family, from which the mother had departed on her long journey, and the daughter had voluntarily isolated herself. The lonely father and motherless younger brothers sat in dreary state around their bountiful table, heaped with all the dainties of Canadian field, river, and forest, sadly recalling the beloved qualities of the dead mother, and bitterly deploring the obduracy of the erratic sister. For although she was destined to become the "marvel of her century and the most perfect model ever offered to young Canadian girls," those whose lot happened to place them in her immediate vicinity were, no doubt, unreasonable enough to deplore their ill-luck in having this saint in their family.

When one of these brothers, Jean Le Ber du Chesne, was mortally wounded in a

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skirmish with the Iroquois and brought dying to his home, his sister again refused to leave her room. When he died Marguerite Bourgeois and a companion hastened to the bereaved family to offer their sympathy and help. Suddenly the "holy recluse" appeared before them, placed in their hands what was needed to shroud the dead brother, prayed silently an instant over his dead body, and silently withdrew, leaving the good Mademoiselle Bourgeois "full of edification and astonishment at so much fortitude and virtue at such a time."

The recluse did not divest herself of all her possessions in thus withdrawing from the world. By this fortunate circumstance she was enabled to carry out a plan which had been formulating itself in her mind by which she could make her separation from the world more complete. For, however successful had been her experiment at solitude in her father's house, this seclusion was

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

more or less interfered with by the necessity of leaving the house every day to go to church. In the intervals between her sacred occupations, she had conceived a plan by which this necessity of appearing daily in public would be forever obviated. The plan was no other than to live in the church.

Marguerite Bourgeois' society of teachers were planning the addition of a chapel to their little establishment. Mademoiselle Le Ber determined to build this chapel at her own expense, and have a retreat set apart in it for herself, where she might pass the rest of her life under the very droppings of the sanctuary. This plan was put immediately into execution, and in the rear of the chapel, behind the altar, extending its whole width and height, with a depth of ten feet, a room was constructed. It was divided into three cells, one above the other, to be used respectively as confessional, sleeping-room, and work-room. There was a small opening in

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the end of the lower cell, through which her food was to be passed in by her attendant, a poor cousin. Her bed was of straw, her dress a coarse gray serge, which she wore until it hung about her in rags, her food the plainest fare. The lower cell was separated from the chapel only by an iron grating, through which she could hear the services without being seen.

She took a vow of perpetual seclusion, August 5, 1695. There is a quaint picture of this ceremony, in which the most striking figures are the pious demoiselle herself kneeling before the altar, around her ministering priests and acolytes, standing erect the stately form of Marguerite Bourgeois, and the merchant Le Ber, stooped now and weeping, making his way out of the chapel. It is said that he offered her a gift of fifty thousand francs to return to her home, but she refused it without hesitation.

The order followed by the recluse in her

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

new retreat has been recorded minutely, — a certain number of hours in silent, and others in audible prayer, a certain time to self-castigation, to reading holy books, to confession, etc., and what time was left after all these spiritual occupations was spent in making artificial flowers and other ornaments, and embroidering altar cloths and chasubles. At midnight she crept forth into the cold and cheerless chapel, and, prostrating herself before the altar, prayed audibly for hours in succession. Although there was a stove in her little apartment, it is averred that she seldom had a fire lighted in it, even in the intense cold of the long northern winter.

Her renown for saintliness began to spread throughout all New France. Pilgrimages were made to her retreat, and many questions asked as to her method of life, to which she seldom vouchsafed an answer. The bishop was proud of this holy prodigy,

### *Maids & Matrons of New France*

and brought many visitors to be edified by her saintly practices. Among others, two Protestant clergymen from New England, who expressed their wonder and amazement at this strange damsel's dwelling-place and manner of life. After returning to their respective homes in New England the biographer avers that one of them was so impressed with the demoiselle Le Ber's exalted virtues and holy life that he renounced his own faith to adopt that so beautifully exemplified in hers.

Her prayers were sought by those going forth to battle against the savages or English. She had been known to avert the destruction of the granary of the community by having a picture of the Virgin placed upon the door, under which was a prayer written by her own hand. This was afterwards stolen by some devout settler who wished to have the safety of his own corn assured, but Mademoiselle Le Ber was pre-

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vailed upon to replace it with another exactly like it.

Thereafter she received many requests for similar prayers, most of which she refused. However, in the year 1711, when the French were apprehending a formidable attack from the English, Baron de Longueuil, Governor of Montreal and Mademoiselle Le Ber's cousin, entreated her for some pious emblem to be carried to battle as a charm against the enemy. She granted his request by presenting him with a banner on which her artist brother, the first to introduce the art of painting into Canada, had painted a picture of the Virgin. Beneath this she wrote the words: "Our foes place all their trust in their arms; but we place ours in the Queen of Angels, whom we invoke. She is as terrible as an army in battle array; under her protection we hope to conquer our enemies." The banner was publicly blessed, to the great edification of the people, and placed in the

## *Maids & Matrons of New France*

hands of the governor. But it was never used to lead his soldiers in battle, for the English fleet about to besiege Quebec met with disaster and ruin through a terrible tempest which arose on the night of the expected attack, and the dismantled ships returned to England defeated and humiliated.

It is said that she never went to the window to look forth into the outer world, but kept strictly in the background of her cell. The window was never opened, however sultry the day, except when she was receiving her food, which she took and ate in silence, passed back the dishes, and disappeared. If she were sick and unable to appear, a note to this effect was found at the window by the attendant, who, on these rare occasions, was allowed to enter this holy precinct and minister to the prostrate form on her pallet of straw.

Her window overlooked the well-kept garden of Marguerite Bourgeois' society, as

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

well as that of her father's house, but she was never known to look out upon these beautiful spots. A new building designed as a boarding-school for girls was being constructed at her expense, and she could hear the shouts of the workmen, and, if she had looked out, could have seen the rising walls of the edifice. But she never did so, and when requested to visit this new building, declined positively to leave her retreat.

I have said that she left little behind her at her death to perpetuate her name except her holiness. This statement may be too positive in face of the fact that she gave all the remnant of her fortune, that she might die poor, to the endowment of this institution. She provided scholarships for seven girls in this school, stipulating that, if they were poor girls, they should not learn to read and write, for this was a sinful waste of time which might be better employed in learning some useful occupation.

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Her father died in the year 1706. He had always profited by his privilege of visiting the recluse twice a year, and had clung to her all these years with tenderness and loyalty. However, she would not consent to be present at his dying bed, and while his funeral services were being chanted in the neighboring church, "what is worthy of admiration is," says her biographer, "that in spite of her deep grief at these mournful sounds she went on with her usual pious exercises as if nothing were happening."

With this unresponsiveness to paternal love, it may be imagined that advances from more distant relatives were met with less courtesy. Two young nephews, children of a wayward brother, came one day to see this wonderful saint of whom they had heard from their babyhood. They went away well satisfied, and frightened, when, after waiting several hours in the little chapel, they at last caught a glimpse of a sombre

## *Jeanne Le Ber*

female figure, in a tattered gray robe, praying behind the gratings of her cell.

She passed twenty years in this retreat behind the altar of the chapel of the Congregation, making in all thirty-five years of seclusion. In 1714 the demoiselle Le Ber died, in an odor of sanctity which enthusiastic historians have wafted down to the twentieth century.

## V

### MADELEINE DE VERCHÈRES

#### THE HEROINE OF CASTLE DANGEROUS

**W**HILE Jeanne Le Ber was living immured behind an altar in a chapel of Montreal, Madeleine de Verchères, the subject of this sketch, was enjoying the buoyant and happy life of the country a few leagues away. Reference has been made in a previous chapter, and will be made more at length in a succeeding one, to a regiment of French soldiers who arrived at Quebec in 1665. Among the officers of this regiment was one Captain Verchères, who resolved to take up his permanent residence there. To encourage emigration to these new settlements, fiefs were at this time be-

## *Madeleine de Verchères*

ing granted on the condition that those to whom they were given would settle colonists upon them. The fief granted to Captain Verchères was an exceedingly dangerous one, for it happened to be in the direct route of the Iroquois to Montreal. From this fact the fort in time came to be known as the Castle Dangerous of Canada. It was built in the usual manner, consisting of a number of log cabins with a blockhouse connected by a covered passage and all surrounded by a palisaded wall.

Here the Seigneur de Verchères lived with his family, and here the farmers and tenants forming the settlement all gathered at nightfall for safety and protection. In the morning they went, with a gun in one hand and a hoe in the other, to cultivate their land, leaving the women and children within the fort. Besides the supervision of this estate, the Seigneur de Verchères had military duties that often called him to Mont-

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real or Quebec, when the fort was left in charge of his family, which consisted of a wife, two boys, and one girl.

These children had been taught from earliest childhood how to handle firearms, and were equally skilful in bringing down a squirrel from the highest branches of the oak-tree or a bird in its flight through the air. They had listened to tales of Iroquois cunning and cruelty until each little heart swelled with horror at the recital of their atrocious deeds, and with pride at the stories of the heroic acts of their countrymen in defending themselves and their homes. One of the boys in after years when young manhood was just filling his heart with the glory of living, when the stars of the officer upon his uniform gave his boyish soul an honest pride, went down on the field of battle, pierced by an Indian arrow.

Madeleine, the daughter, lived many years after the brave defence here recorded, for

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which the French government gave her a liberal life pension. She married a Monsieur de la Naudière, and after a few years became a widow. Then in another encounter with the Indians she saved a French gentleman from death at their hands. And as such things are in fairy tales, so was this in reality, she became the wife of the man she had saved. Her girlhood was passed amid scenes of danger and alarm, and she early became accustomed to the sight of the painted savages, and their terrifying war-cry was a familiar sound in her ears. Only two years before, she had seen her mother, with three or four men, defend the fort against a party of Iroquois, so that it was not only by precept but by example also that she had learned the lesson of courage. For six days and nights she defended the fort without wavering or faltering, and when the ordeal was over she came down to the ordinary pleasures of her fourteen years, and

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devoted herself to the entertainment of the friend whose coming had been fraught with such a terrifying experience.

It seems strange that the fort should ever have been left with so little protection as it was on this eventful 22d of October, 1692. But there had been no attacks for some time, and the settlers were feeling a little more secure than in the past. Captain Verchères was on duty in Quebec, and his wife was visiting friends in Montreal. Madeleine, left in charge of her younger brothers and the fort, thought to pass the time agreeably by inviting a friend from Montreal, twenty miles away, to stay a few days with her. So on this bright October morning, filled with the thought of seeing her friend and hearing those bits of gossip about Paris that were as glimpses of fairyland to this forest child, she started gayly forth to meet her at the river landing and conduct her to the fort. Calling a single servant to accompany

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her, she went on her way singing snatches of songs that rivalled the sweetness of the carolling birds above her. The sun was shining brightly on the gorgeous autumn leaves and reflecting the glowing tints of the sky on the bosom of the river.

She stood for a moment on the bank, her uplifted hand shading her eyes, glancing up the stream. But, no, the skiff of her friend was not yet in sight, and, turning idly to amuse herself while she waited, she heard a sound from the field where the settlers were at work. What was it? "Run, Laviolette, to the top of the hillock and see," she called to the servant, but still not apprehensive of danger. Then she turned again to glance up the river and at the peaceful, beautiful scene about her. But she was suddenly startled from her meditations by the terrified voice of the servant calling, "Run, Mademoiselle, run! here come the Iroquois!" As she turned quickly at the

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sound, she saw, not more than a pistol-shot away, forty or fifty of the savages coming toward her.

It did not need the sight of their war paint and feathers to lend wings to the feet of this young girl, and she soon outstripped in speed the swift-running Iroquois. On, on, she fled, as the thought of the nameless horrors that would follow her capture flashed through her mind. At last they saw that her fleetness would gain the fort before they could reach and capture her alive, and so they sent their deadly bullets whistling about her ears. Only a minute was between her and safety, and yet with the sound of those bullets in her ears, it seemed an age before she reached the fort. "To arms! to arms!" she shouted, when near enough to be heard. But not a face showed itself, not a shot was fired in her defence. Those within were filled with terror, the only two soldiers left to

## *Madeleine de Verchères*

protect the fort having hidden themselves in the blockhouse.

Without the gate she found two of the women rushing about and tearing their hair with the agony of new-born grief. Their husbands, who had cheerfully bade them good-bye in the morning when they went out to till their fields and prepare them for the spring seeding, had just been killed by the savages. Madeleine instantly realized the imminent danger these women were in, and assuming a stern and commanding mien she ordered them to go inside. Dazed by their grief, they mutely obeyed her, and not a moment too soon was the gate closed. Inside the fort she found the two soldiers in the blockhouse, standing with blanched faces and a lighted match in their hands, ready to blow it up and save themselves from Iroquois torture. When Madeleine comprehended their intent, with flashing eyes she snatched the burning match from the nerve-

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less hand, and stamping it under foot, ordered the men out of the blockhouse.

She then proceeded to examine the condition of the wall. Openings were found in it large enough for the enemy to enter. Surely these, had they only known it, could not have chosen a better time to attack the fort. Two cowardly soldiers, an old man of eighty, a number of women and children, two boys, a servant, and a young girl were all there were to oppose the howling troop of demons. But they did not know this, and therein lay the safety of the little group.

As soon as Madeleine saw the openings in the wall, she hastened and with the help of the men put up the palisades that had been thrown down. With a thoughtfulness that seems almost incredible in one so young, she tossed aside her woman's head-gear and placed a man's hat upon her head, so that if the Indians saw her they would take her for a man and therefore a more formidable

*Madeleine de Verchères*

opponent. Calling her two young brothers to her, lads of ten and twelve years, she said to them, "Let us fight to the death; we are fighting for our country and our religion. Remember that our father has taught you that gentlemen are born to shed their blood for God and the king!"

Opposite the poorly manned fort the Iroquois stood debating upon the best plan of attack. But Madeleine did not wait for them to attack her; with her small command she began, through the loopholes, a scattering fire upon the Indians. The weapons in the hands of these young warriors were not the toy guns of the children of to-day, but guns carrying death-dealing missiles, and they were fired with a steady and true aim. The Indians drew back; they had not calculated on being put so soon on the defensive. Open attack was now out of the question; they must resort to cunning to gain their ends.

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While they were thus hesitating, Madeleine remembered that there were men out in the fields at work, who might know nothing as yet of the danger that threatened them. How could she warn them without betraying herself to the enemy? This question was solved by firing off the one cannon in the fort. The sound reached far, and not only warned the laborers, but frightened the Indians, who withdrew farther from the fort. All the time, however, that they were planning the best method of attacking the fort, they were searching for these laborers whom they knew to be in the fields. Some of these unfortunates did not succeed in escaping, and then from the blockhouse went up the shrieks and cries of the women and children who saw their husbands and fathers struck down and tortured. But even to give vent to their grief in this human fashion was forbidden them, for if the enemy heard it, they would know the fort was weakly defended.

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As Madeleine soothed their anguish, a fresh cause for anxiety came to her. A canoe was gliding swiftly up the river. It contained the friend whose coming she had so gayly anticipated. She must be warned at any cost. Some one must walk from the gate of the fort down to the landing and bring her up. But who would do this? The two soldiers, when it was mentioned to them, instantly refused. They had somewhat regained their courage under the example of Madeleine, and aided her all they could within the fort. But to step outside the fortified place and walk down to the landing-place in full view of half a hundred lurking savages! No; that they would not do. No one but the intrepid girl had courage enough for this. The savages would doubtless think it simply a ruse to lure them within reach of that dreadful loud-sounding gun and not molest her, she reasoned. And she reasoned rightly, for not a savage came

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forth from his hiding-place as she walked calmly down to the landing and brought back not only her friend, Marguerite Fontaine, but her friend's husband, Pierre.

Then all through the long bright day they watched, taking deadly aim at any Iroquois who for an instant forgot caution and ventured into view. This watchfulness told the savages plainly that a daylight attack would be met with fierce resistance. The night was coming on, and they bided their time. But Madeleine also knew that night was coming, and she prepared for it. She sent Pierre Fontaine and the two children to the blockhouse in charge of the women and children, and said to them, before they went, "God has saved us to-day from the hands of our enemies, but we must take care not to fall into their snares to-night. As for me, I want you to see that I am not afraid. I will take charge of the fort with an old man of eighty and another who never fired

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a gun; and you, Pierre Fontaine, with La Bonté and Gachet (the two soldiers), will go to the blockhouse with the women and children because that is the strongest place; and if I am taken, do not surrender, even if I am cut to pieces or burned before your eyes. The enemy cannot hurt you in the blockhouse if you make the least resistance." Thus sending the three strongest men to the safest place, she went with the others and her two brothers to the weakest, to keep watch the long night through.

The night had turned in cold and wintry, and snow and hail were falling. Nothing broke the stillness of the night but the measured tread of the weak trio of pickets and the ever-recurring sound, "All's well," echoing from fort to blockhouse, and from blockhouse to fort. The cunning Iroquois scout was deceived, as he afterwards confessed to the governor at Montreal, into thinking the fort was full of armed men.

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At one o'clock a strange sound was heard, and Madeleine hastened to investigate the cause. But it was only some of the cattle returning. With her usual caution she would not permit the gate to be opened for their entrance until she had assured herself by closely scrutinizing their movements that they were not Iroquois concealed in animal hides. Even then she posted her two brothers one on each side of the gate with guns cocked, and orders to fire in case the faintest suspicion that one of the animals was other than it seemed, which fortunately was not the case.

The long night wore through, and when morning dawned the spirits of the inmates of the fort revived. Danger can be met so much more bravely in daylight than in darkness. But all too quickly the hours passed, bringing the darkness again. There had been little excitement during the day. The Indians overestimated the strength and

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numbers of the defenders, and skulked from one tree or protecting bush to another. When occasionally one exposed himself to view, a shot from the fort caused him quickly to seek cover again. Madame Fontaine, unused to Indian warfare, weakly begged her husband to slip away with her and seek safety in some other fort. But he, filled with admiration for the bravery displayed by the girl commander, and knowing too that the chances of safety were far greater in the besieged fort than they would be in the open field or wood trying to evade the cunning watchfulness of the Iroquois, refused to go. Madeleine passed the day in trying to dispel the fears of her friend, soothing the women and children, encouraging the men, praising her brave young brothers, and watching for any signs of movement on the part of the Iroquois.

Night came down and passed, and daylight and again the night. Madeleine, like

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an alert and watchful general, posted her sentries on each bastion. The first two nights, to quote her own words, she did not eat or sleep for twice twenty-four hours, nor go once into her father's house, but kept always on the bastion, or went to the blockhouse to encourage those there. After these first two trying nights and days she was able to get some sleep by placing herself in front of a table, folding her arms upon this, and with her gun resting upon her arms and her head upon her gun, she was ready at the first note of warning to snatch up her weapon and face the enemy.

Whence would come help to the little band? How would their friends know of their danger and come to their rescue? They were not aware that some of the laborers in the fields had escaped and were slowly but surely making their way to Montreal. Six days passed, and the fort continued to be besieged. The band within

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still bravely watched while the relentless savages awaited stolidly but persistently for an opportunity safely to attack them. Early on the seventh day, while the darkness of night still covered the earth, the little boy, Alexander, who was on watch on that side of the fort facing the river, heard voices and the splashing of oars in the water. "Qui vive?" he called bravely, but with a sinking heart, thinking it might be the canoes of the enemy. Madeleine, hearing the cry at the table where she was taking a short nap, sprang up and ran to the bastion. Hearing voices in a language that sounded like her own, she called, "Who are you?" "We are Frenchmen; it is La Monnerie who comes to bring you help."

The siege was over. For six days and nights a girl of fourteen, aided by two boys and three men, had held a fort against a troop of savages many times their number. Posting her sentries at the gates, she walked

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calmly and with dignity down to the landing, saluting Monsieur de la Monnerie as a soldier, "Monsieur, I surrender to you my arms," to which she received the gallant reply, "Mademoiselle, they are in good hands!"

## FOURTH PERIOD

### *ADVENT OF THE CARIGNAN REGIMENT*

#### I

### COMING OF THE KING'S GIRLS

OR

### MARRIAGES AND SOCIAL LIFE IN NEW FRANCE

**T**HE first half-century of the colony of New France passed away before the farm and the family, the two elements most needful to its growth, as stated by Marc Lescarbot in the introduction to this work, had found a place there. In 1666 the rival colony of New England had a population of eighty thousand people, while there were only thirty-five hundred in New France.

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Then an event took place which changed the whole aspect of affairs in Canada. Louis XIV. suddenly awoke from the indifference with which he had regarded this western colony, and determined to make it a New France indeed. A regiment of French soldiers, recruited near the little town of Carignan in France, had rendered themselves famous through several successful charges they had made in one of his wars. To reward them for their services, as well as to furnish settlers for the new colony, and incidentally to protect the inhabitants from the incursions of the Iroquois, they were sent over to Canada at different periods between 1665 and 1667, forty companies in all. Their colonel was Monsieur Salières, whence the regiment became known as that of Carignan-Salières.

As soon as they arrived, the officers were given large tracts of land, which they rented out to those who had been in their com-

*Louis XIV.*



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panies, thus forming a sort of military colony along the banks of the great rivers, which remained for many years the only highways of communication. The frontage of these farms was very narrow, but they extended back several miles; in fact, the length was generally as far back as their owners chose to clear the land. In the course of time this was divided up into smaller farms for their children, until finally the farm was often reduced to one very long and very narrow field, such as are even nowadays to be seen around Montreal and Quebec.

The colonel of the Carignan regiment, worn out with service in many wars, after seeing his men well settled in their new homes, returned to France. The soldiers were forbidden this privilege, for it was evident that their remaining in Canada would be the only means of getting the land cleared and increasing the population. The best way to insure their permanent residence in the

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country was to have them marry, if wives could be found for them. But these important factors in the carrying out of such an excellent plan were conspicuous by their absence, for the few daughters of the settlers either had already fallen victims to the snares of Cupid in the form of some ambitious young trader, or had found a refuge behind the walls of convent or hospital. It was seen, too, that heroic measures must be taken to prevent the young men from allying themselves with Indian women, for then the large families which were looked upon as the hope of New France, would dwindle down to three or four half-breeds, and these of doubtful value as future citizens.

After serious consideration it was decided to follow the example of the Virginian and New England colonies; to import girls from the mother country and to have matrimonial markets at Quebec and Montreal at least twice a year, where these swains

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could choose themselves a wife. The king entered enthusiastically into this plan, so enthusiastically that there was danger, says a critic, of depopulating Old France for the sake of providing families for the New. Almost every ship brought over large or small consignments of girls, according to the demand, who thereafter became known as "the king's girls." They performed their mission of establishing homes and families with admirable celerity, and the parish priests were kept in a continual flurry between tying nuptial knots and baptizing children. Bounties were placed upon large families, and for many successive years the population of Canada increased far beyond the hopes of the most sanguine. But the Old World follies and vices brought over by these new importations, swaggering young soldiers who had seen life in many countries, and sprightly, coquettish maids, changed the whole nature of primitive Canadian society.

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The betrothal and marriage of these damsels was not a very ceremonious and stately affair. Two weeks after the arrival of each company all had to be married off. To facilitate this matter and hasten the choice of the more deliberate youths, a law was made that every young man who had not chosen a wife at the end of a fortnight after their arrival should be deprived of the privileges of hunting, trading, and fishing. Those who absolutely refused to marry were dealt with still more severely, for it was recommended that they should be denied all positions of honor, and, if practicable, be branded with some marks of infamy.

The character of the girls was not always unimpeachable, and it was occasionally necessary to return some of them to France, that the morals of the community might not be corrupted. There were even some who had left husbands at home and secretly slipped into the company, to seek

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partners more to their taste in the New World. In truth, so many irregularities at last crept in that it was deemed advisable to provide the girls with certificates of good character to present on their arrival at Quebec. The women who had charge of this "merchandise," as Marie Guyard jocosely called them, had much trouble in keeping them in order during the voyage across the ocean. But Marguerite Bourgeois, who brought several consignments for Montreal, managed to ingratiate herself well with them and was ever afterwards the object of their good-will. She superintended their choice of partners with great sagacity, naïvely confessing that it was necessary for her to be there because families were to be made.

These annual matrimonial markets of pioneer days have been made the jest of satirist and critic. There is one in particular who has been quoted by nearly every Canadian historian who has referred to this

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subject, and it may not be out of place here, also, to give his account of the affair in his own words; but a few lines regarding the history of the man himself will readily explain the motive he had for thus holding the colonists up to ridicule.

In 1683 there arrived at Quebec a young Gascon, the Baron La Hontan, who had risen through native shrewdness and ability from the position of a soldier in the ranks to that of officer. He was a witty and amusing fellow and soon succeeded in ingratiating himself in the favor of the governor, Count Frontenac, who had the clannish spirit of the men of Gascony. For many years La Hontan filled offices of trust and honor in Canada, but at last, through some misdemeanor, he incurred the displeasure of his chief, and was obliged to flee from Quebec and make his way back to France. Here, following a custom more or less popular in those days, he wrote a book on New

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France, wherein he vented his spleen against the people, the government, and the clergy. In this he declares that all the statements he will make on these subjects are "truths clearer than the day," notwithstanding the contrary statements of future wiseacres who will seek to discredit them.

"After these first inhabitants there came a folk useful to the country and a good riddance to the Kingdom. There arrived one day at Quebec a small fleet loaded with Amazons and crowds of females, Nuns of Paphos or of Cythera conducting this precious cargo. I have been told the circumstances of their coming, and I cannot resist the pleasure of sharing the story with you.

"This chaste flock was led to the pasture by old and prudish Shepherdesses. As soon as they had arrived, these wrinkled dames passed their Soldierly in review, and having separated them into three Classes, each group entered a different Room. As they had to crowd quite close together on account of the smallness of the place, they made rather a pleasant decoration and the good merchant Cupid had no reason to be ashamed of his wares.

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Never had he made a better assortment. Blonde, brunette, red, black, fat, thin, large, small, he could satisfy the most bizarre and most fastidious tastes.

“The report of the new cargo being spread abroad, all the well-intentioned in the way of multiplication hastened thither. As it was not permitted to examine all and still less to take them on trial, it was a case of buying a pig in a poke, or rather of buying the whole piece from the sample. But the disposal of them was none the less rapid on this account. Each selected his partner and in a fortnight these three lots of venison had been taken away with all the seasoning that could be taken with them.

“The next day the governor-general caused to be distributed to them enough provisions to give them courage to embark upon this stormy sea. They went to housekeeping almost as did Noah in the ark, with an ox, a cow, a pair of swine, a pair of fowls, two barrels of salted meat, and a piece of money. The Officers were more fastidious than the Soldiers, and allied themselves with the daughters of other Officers or of the richer settlers who had been established in the country for nearly a century.”

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After this description of the coming of the "king's girls" to New France, La Hontan gives his opinion of other peculiarities of the country, which, though interesting, have no place in these pages. I will only dwell upon this subject long enough to give the dowry of one of the officers' daughters to whom he refers. It was as follows:—

"Two hundred francs, four sheets, two tablecloths, six napkins of linen and hemp, a mattress, a blanket, two dishes, six spoons and six tin plates, a pot and kettle, a table and two benches, a kneading trough, a chest with lock and key, a cow and a pair of swine. But a poor girl brought her husband only a barrel of bacon, and that not to be delivered until the ships arrived from France."

As I have said, many worldly customs crept into the hitherto simple and pious life of the colony through the coming of these Old World swains and lasses. To counteract these influences the clergy is-

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sued edicts and warnings innumerable, even drawing up a code of behavior for the women. They reproved them sternly for their extravagance in dress, declaring that the rich and dazzling fabrics in which they arrayed themselves were far beyond their means. The clerical wrath was directed particularly against the way of dressing the hair, for the heads were uncovered and full of strange trinkets and the hair worn in the immodest curls so expressly forbidden by Saints Peter and Paul. The terrible fate of the unfortunate Pretexta was cited by one of these censors. Her hands were withered and she died a painful death and was precipitated into hell, because she curled the hair of a niece and dressed her up in a worldly fashion.

Yet the light-hearted women continued to enjoy their new frivolities, in spite of the mandates of Church and clergy, for "Gallic gayety will out, in the backwoods or on the

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boulevards." The annals of the times tell of many severe measures resorted to by the clergy to keep the maids and young matrons within the established bound of decorum. At one time there was a law that all girls and women should be shut up in their houses at nine o'clock at night, and those who violated this injunction and attended a masked ball were dragged from their beds at midnight by officers of the town and whipped. Women of quality were forbidden to wear lace, and those who wore their hair in a topknot were refused the privilege of the communion.

Notwithstanding these outcries, the frivolous customs of the mother country took deep root and flourished in the now thriving colonies. The worldly-minded Count Frontenac, recalled as governor of New France in 1689, did his best to encourage this new order of things, and himself took the lead in many of the most scandalous proceedings.

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He was in constant warfare with the Jesuits, and took pleasure in introducing those forms of diversion that he knew were particularly distasteful to them. Masked balls and plays were given and were attended by the most devout people of the community, women as well as men.

The first ball given in Canada caused little censure from these pious guardians of the public morals, for it was soon after the arrival of the Carignan soldiers and the "king's girls," and these new recruits had to be beguiled into remaining by every possible means. There was a time also, half a century earlier, when the first theatrical performance represented there was not only approved by the clergy but received their enthusiastic co-operation. This was in 1640, and was for the purpose of teaching the savages the awful consequences of not accepting Christian doctrine. It was a serio-comic play, given at Quebec at the sugges-

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tion of the governor to celebrate the birth of the dauphin, who now, as Louis XIV., was devoting himself with such zeal to the interests of the colony. "I would not have believed," says Father Le Jeune in his journal, "that such a splendid performance could have been given in Quebec."

"The Sieur Martial Piraubé, who superintended the play and assumed the principal part in it, succeeded admirably. But that our Savages might derive some benefit from it, Monsieur the Chevalier de Montmagny, our governor, endowed with no ordinary zeal and prudence, invited us to introduce something into the play which might attract their attention and impress itself on their memory. Accordingly, we caused the soul of an infidel to be pursued by two furies who finally drove it into a yawning chasm vomiting forth flames. The struggles, cries, and shrieks of these furies, who spoke the Indian tongue, so penetrated the hearts of some of the Savages, that one of them told me the next day he had spent a horrible night, seeing in his dreams a terrible gulf whence issued flames and demons, which seemed about to seize and carry him away."

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This representation, together with pictures alive with lost souls and pursuing demons, for which Le Jeune sent expressly to France, had the desired effect for a while, and praying savages were stumbled upon everywhere throughout the little settlement.

But the plays of Count Frontenac were of quite a different character from these pious representations, and would have caused the zealous Le Jeune, now dead some forty years, to turn over in his grave. Instead of awakening the consciences of benighted savages, they were intended rather to hold up to ridicule the Jesuit friars themselves and their precepts. The clerical party bitterly and vigorously opposed this innovation, for it meant the introduction into simple Canadian life of the vices, excesses, and loose manners of the Old World, that were bound to counteract the effect of all their teachings. But to their chagrin, the plays continued to be given and were participated

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in by some of the most zealous of their adherents. The ladies frequently curtailed their devotions to take part in the rehearsals of some interdicted play, and so readily fell into the new order of things that jewels, low-necked gowns, and volumes of Molière or Corneille had soon superseded the prayer-book and rosary. But what no interdict of priest or bishop could effect came about through ominous rumors that began to be circulated throughout the colony. All frivolities ceased, the men took to polishing their swords and practising military tactics, and the women to their devotions. There was cause enough to sober the most volatile member of the now thriving colony, for the long peace was about to be broken in upon by the most formidable attack that their enemies, the English, had ever planned against them. This was the first siege of Quebec.

## II

### WOMEN IN THE FIRST SIEGE OF QUEBEC

I HAVE stated in the story of Madeleine de Verchères that there was another occasion, two years before her defence of Castle Dangerous, when her father was obliged to be away on military duty. In 1690 he, with all other able-bodied men capable of bearing arms, was summoned to Quebec by the governor of the colony, to help defend it against the two invading forces of the English army, which were to annihilate all the French colonies in the New World.

Since the earliest discoveries in America England and France had been contending over the ownership of territory there. We

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have seen how de Poutrincourt's colony at Port Royal was destroyed by the English under Captain Argall in 1613, and how Dame Hébert was left alone with her little family on the dreary heights of Quebec awaiting the return of the French, who had been obliged to yield to the victorious Kirke in 1629. For nearly sixty years afterwards there was a truce in these contentions, each colony being too much occupied with internal disorders and harrowing strife with the surrounding savages to renew hostilities.

But one day in the autumn of 1690 a New England fleet, under Sir William Phips, sailed off to the north, and after a voyage of six weeks turned into the great Gulf of St. Lawrence. There was also a formidable English army making its way by land toward Montreal. By these two invading forces New France was to be crushed definitely.

Count Frontenac was still governor of the colony. He was not popular with all

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of the people, especially with the clergy, as has been said. But the home government recognized in him a vigorous administrator, fitted, if any one was, to handle the complicated affairs of the colony. He dealt with the difficulties which confronted him there in an original manner, which succeeded in solving some of the most vexed questions, particularly that important one which related to their attitude toward the Iroquois. He adopted a new and comparatively successful method of treating this hostile nation, by declaring a truce to the eternal warfare waged against them, and sought their friendship.

Many amusing anecdotes are told of him while trying to carry out this policy. He entered into their pastimes with enthusiasm and sincerity. Once, to gain their good-will for some particular object, he is said to have joined in one of their war-dances, and to have danced with such agility and abandon,

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in spite of his seventy years, that he outdid the most proficient of the Indians, who laughingly applauded his performance. He went among them frequently on some amicable mission, seldom returning to Quebec without being accompanied by the dark-eyed daughter of some powerful chief. These were educated among the French, and were sent back as peacemakers to their nation.

It was while on one of these pacific missions among the Iroquois that he learned of the impending attack on Quebec. A faithful Indian ally, hearing of Sir William Phips' projected expedition from an English-woman captured by his tribe, walked all the way from the coast of Maine to Quebec to apprise the colonists of their danger. Thus warned, by the time Admiral Phips had dropped anchor before Quebec the batteries which crowned its rocky summit were in readiness to receive him. The English admiral sent a messenger to Frontenac to

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demand the surrender of Quebec in the name of the King of England. The subtuges resorted to by the French to impress this envoy with the strength and extent of their fortifications are recounted by the historians of the times. He was blindfolded, led over barricade after barricade, up steep slopes and through narrow passages. As he passed through the soldiers' quarters they clanked their swords and stamped their feet to give the impression of a great army marching. When he entered the council chamber, and his eyes were unbandaged, the dazzling uniforms of the high officials of the government and the haughty expressions of their faces made such an impression upon him that he almost lost his self-control and with difficulty delivered his message.

Nothing now remains of the old Château St. Louis, where this historic meeting took place, to satisfy the curiosity of the modern tourist. It dated back to Champlain's time

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and stood, with various alterations and through many changes and vicissitudes, for more than two centuries. The present magnificent Château Frontenac, built upon its site, is a fitting monument to the name of this hero, but it were better had the old council chamber been left to commemorate to the French Canadian boy of to-day the independent spirit of his forefathers. Here he could see in imagination the nervous envoy fumbling for the watch given him by his master, handing it to Frontenac and demanding that in one hour from the time indicated he should expect his answer. And he could hear the wrathful old governor thundering forth the famous challenge, "I will not keep you waiting so long, sir! Go tell your master that I will answer him only by the mouth of my cannon. Let him do his best and I will do mine!"

It is not in my province to describe this momentous siege, but let us turn for a few

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moments to those two familiar buildings, the Hôtel-Dieu and the seminary, to view briefly the part the women took in it. At the first alarm they were warned to leave Quebec and take refuge in the village of Lorette among the peaceful Huron Indians who were still living under their protection. The seminary was in a particularly dangerous position, directly in a line with the cannon of the hostile fleet. Hasty preparations were made for flight, although these faithful women were reluctant to leave this great institution with all its valuable contents, not the least being the historical documents stored in its archives. As it turned out, they were not obliged to do this, after all, for as soon as Count Frontenac appeared on the scene, he peremptorily ordered them to remain, urging the necessity of their being there to minister to the soldiers and comfort the frightened women and children. Hundreds of the helpless

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inhabitants took refuge among them, and taxed their accommodations to the utmost during the five or six days that the siege lasted. There was not enough room to sit down, and one of the women artlessly complains in her journal that they were obliged during all this time to stand, and to eat what food was left after the others had been supplied. Ball after ball passed through the walls of the building, creating havoc among the inmates and almost irreparable injury to the building itself. The one which caused the most consternation was that which tore a hole in a woman's apron, carrying the piece away with it, but happily causing no more serious trouble.

The women of the Hôtel-Dieu were prepared to receive the wounded and dying and minister to their wants. But, fortunately, they were not often called upon for these services, as there were only a few of the French wounded in the siege and still fewer

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killed. But if not called upon as nurses, they were much in demand at this time as purveyors to the hungry soldiers and officers. They tell plaintively how they were obliged to cook peas and beans by the boilerful and how the impatient men would eat the bread out of the oven before it was half baked. They warmed themselves at their fires, plundered their garden, and even carried off their lumber to make palisades.

The ladies of the government circle, who had so recently been slaves to folly and fashion, were now devoted to their prayer-books. Incessant prayers and vows were sent up to heaven by them for preservation from the powerful foe moored yonder with his formidable wall of stately ships. At first view of these, even the most sanguine of the French officers had little expectation of success against them. But an incompetent commander, unfamiliar with the St. Lawrence and its landmarks, sickness and hunger

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among the soldiers, and a lack of provisions for a long siege, resulted in humiliating defeat.

The haughty Admiral Phips, completely humbled, dropped anchor in his retreat below the Isle of Orleans to take account of his losses and repair some of the damage done by the French batteries. While engaged in this duty a comely Frenchwoman, Madame La Lande, appeared before him and humbly begged the favor of being sent with her daughter, Madame Joliet, as envoys to Count Frontenac to request an exchange of prisoners. These two ladies, granddaughter and great-granddaughter respectively of our first pioneer matron, Dame Hébert, had been taken prisoners by Phips thirty leagues below Quebec from an outgoing French vessel. Her request was granted and the two were sent on parole to lay the matter before the governor of Quebec.

In the evening Madame La Lande and

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Madame Joliet, whose name will be familiar to American readers, for it was her husband, Louis Joliet, to whom the discovery and exploration of much of the Mississippi valley is due, returned to the ship with Frontenac's consent to the exchange. It was effected the next morning, the French prisoners were taken back to Quebec, and the English, among whom were the two beautiful daughters of one of the lieutenants, were brought to the admiral's ship and taken on board. Then it sailed out into the Atlantic, to meet further disaster there from the furious autumn gales that were then raging over the ocean. The hearts of the French colonists were filled with joy, which culminated soon after when they saw sailing up the broad river the long-expected ships from France which were bringing them their annual supplies. A long and gorgeous procession was formed of the most distinguished men and women in the colony, in honor of

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Frontenac and all the saints and soldiers who had been instrumental in the victory, and marched about the town with songs of praise and thanksgiving. A chapel which was being erected in the Lower Town was christened, to proclaim this great event to posterity, "Our Lady of the Victory." It may be seen to-day, in much of its primitive simplicity, opposite the old hotel which marks Madame de la Peltrie's first night in New France. Twenty-one years later, on the occasion mentioned in the story of Jeanne Le Ber, when her banner was carried against the English in another unsuccessful attack, the name was changed to "Our Lady of the Victories."

Count Frontenac did not live many years longer to lead his countrymen to victory, but the follies he encouraged took deep root and flourished. Quebec became a miniature Paris, and the stately dames of the Canadian court rivalled their sisters across the sea in

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extravagance and prodigality, as well as in many of the corrupt practices of society in the mother country; until finally scandal and intrigue culminated in the administration of the notorious François Bigot and his partner in vice, Madame de Pean.

III  
THE TWO POMPADOURS

OR  
WOMEN IN THE DOWNFALL OF NEW  
FRANCE

THE passing of New France from the geography of French possessions in the New World occurred during the reign of Louis XV., great-grandson of Louis XIV., and the woman known in history as "La Pompadour." A few words will recall to the reader the position this woman held in the affairs of France.

The place of king's favorite had been made vacant by the death of Madame de Châteauroux. Madame d'Étioles, wife of a petty officer of the kingdom, beautiful, witty, accomplished, aspired to fill it. She contrived to meet the king frequently in his

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hunts, appearing ravishingly attired as Diana, sometimes in blue in a rose-colored phaeton, then in rose in a blue phaeton. These casual meetings so piqued the curiosity of the king that at a great masked ball at the Hôtel de Ville he managed to have several interviews with the beautiful huntress. The conquest thus auspiciously begun was consummated when, as she was leaving the ball-room, she dropped her handkerchief purposely near her royal admirer. He picked it up and tossed it to her over the heads of the people. Madame d'Étioles caught the filmy bit of lace, made a low and graceful curtsy, and passed out with the crowd. Soon after this she became known as Madame de Pompadour, and began, in the palace at Versailles, a reign of pleasure, frivolity, and abandonment which lasted for nearly twenty years, and which has imprinted her name not only on the leaves of history, but on headdresses, fabrics, and stately house-

*Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour*



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hold furnishings. In her boudoir the business of the kingdom was transacted. A nod of approval, a suggestion, a curt negative, made and unmade men. The king showered her with the riches of the tottering realm and staked its security on her caprices. His ministers remonstrated with him on his neglect of the colonies. To these remonstrances he disdainfully replied that the colonies would likely last as long as the monarchy. But they were destined to fall long before even the fickle king anticipated.

Two years before the close of the seventeenth century Count Frontenac had died in the place which had been the scene of his great achievements. History has not exonerated him from participation in the frauds which afterwards assumed such magnitude; although dishonesty in the government of Canada had been introduced long before he became its chief executive. In some curious

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old documents, carefully treasured in the historical archives of Quebec, he accuses the missionaries with showing a greater zeal for acquiring the skin of the beaver than saving the souls of the savages. The missionaries retaliate by implicating him in the same traffic. Few who had the opportunity to indulge in it could resist this tempting means of increasing their incomes. Valuable furs of the lynx, otter, seal, and marten, gained from the simple Indians in exchange for a few flasks of firewater, were sold to the New England colonists or to European traders for fabulous sums. Not only the men but the women engaged in this fascinating pastime, and even Madame Denonville, the governor's wife, who was held up by the bishop to the ladies of Quebec as a model of propriety, set up a shopful of goods in the official residence, and what she could not sell over the counter she disposed of by a lottery.

This illegal barter, which increased with

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each succeeding governor, was well known to the home government, but was graciously overlooked by indulgent ministers. When a complaint against one of the last and most unscrupulous governors, Monsieur Vaudreuil, was sent to the king's minister, the latter only wrote on the margin of the document, "Well, he's poor!" Monsieur Perrot, governor of Montreal, whose transaction with an Indian has been mentioned in a previous chapter, was applauded because he cleverly multiplied a yearly salary of a thousand crowns by fifty, through this traffic with the Indians.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that when the peculations of these men of fairly good repute were overlooked by the ministers of King Louis, those of François Bigot, who came to Quebec as intendant, or associate governor, in 1747, should have been allowed to assume such magnitude that in ten years they brought about the ruin of the colony.

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This "king of knaves" was one of the favorites of La Pompadour and had been appointed through her influence. Soon after his arrival he built the celebrated warehouse called "La Friponne" (the Fraud) for the storage of grain which he wrung from the starving people. Agents were sent by him throughout all Canada to buy up the grains which, by a royal decree, the farmers had to sell him at a certain price. In reply to their expostulations, for they had toiled hard for these precious crops, the decree was thrust into their faces, and they were told that if they refused to give up the grain it would be confiscated. In this way La Friponne was soon filled with the best produce of the colony. It was sold at a high price to the government, and the profit realized was shared by Bigot and his associates. One of these was Hugues de Pean, who is known to posterity chiefly as the husband of the most

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celebrated woman in the latter days of Quebec.

So many romantic incidents have been woven about Madame de Pean's life, that it is difficult, from the meagre mention of her in the old documents of the times, to gather her real history. For, while the saints of New France have left authenticated, and in some cases voluminous, records of their lives, the sinners have not perpetuated their deeds on the pages of history.

Angélique des Meloises, afterward Madame de Pean, was the daughter of an influential citizen of Quebec, whose family name had been memorable in the annals of the colony ever since the coming of the Carignan-Salières regiment. She was educated among the Ursulines, where one of her aunts had, many years before, immured herself through an unhappy love affair and had died after praying twenty years for the one who had deceived her. This institution

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was still carrying out the precept of Mother Marie Guyard to "teach girls all they ought to know," and half the young girls of Canada were being educated in it. But it seemed that all a girl ought to know in those times was very little. Angélique came forth from the seminary a beautiful girl, with a fondness for dress, a love of admiration, and aspirations for power and great wealth. Even the dry historians of those days, who are loath to devote more than a passing notice to the women who take part in the events they describe, characterize her as "lively, witty, mild, and obliging, and her conversation amusing."

She was tall, with bronze-gold hair, a fair complexion, and a pair of magnetic eyes which had a wonderful power over those whom she wished to attract. In truth, she had all the graces of the beautiful French-woman of the world. A recent novelist,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Kirby — *The Golden Dog*.

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who makes her the heroine of a brilliant romance, has pictured her to his readers in the zenith of her youth and beauty. She is leaning over her balcony in a fine old mansion on St. Louis Street. Arrayed in the Parisian finery brought over in the last ship, decked with dazzling jewels, she meets with an answering smile the admiring glances cast up at her by the cavaliers who pass with clanking swords down the roughly paved and narrow thoroughfare. Here she sat of summer evenings, surrounded by a bevy of Quebec's fair daughters, and wove those dreams of love and intrigue which were to make her the greatest of them all.

Many of these young gallants, rich, handsome, and well-born, were her declared suitors. The favored one was the young Seigneur de Repentigny, whose fair kinswoman, Madeleine de Repentigny, has been referred to in the story of Madame de la Peltrie. The story of this young cavalier's ardent

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wooing of Angélique, his wild revels, his jealousy, and the tragic *dénouement* brought about through the coquetry of this capricious beauty, whose ambition had assumed the form of an intrigue with the intendant Bigot, have been depicted by the novelist in thrilling and realistic language. Her hand was finally conferred upon Hugues de Pean, who was, then secretary to Bigot.

Not long after his marriage to Angélique des Meloises, Monsieur de Pean engaged in a transaction which made him immensely rich. Money was advanced to him by his chief from the public treasury, and with this he purchased great quantities of wheat from the surrounding farmers. This was sold to the government at a profit, and De Pean became one of the wealthiest men of Quebec. François Bigot became a daily guest at his home, and the highest dames of Quebec, however rebellious, were made to bow down before the fair Angélique as their

*“ The Old Mansion still Stands ”*



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leader. The old mansion which he gave her about this time still exists, and when tourists direct their steps to 59 St. Louis Street they will see a house made memorable by the downfall of a beautiful woman and, indirectly, the ruin of a colony.

Madame de Pean, who became known as La Pompadour of New France, drew lavishly on the purse of the intendant, or, in other words, upon the treasury of New France, and for many years lived in pomp and luxury equal to that of her rival across the sea. But, though she could command the purse of the erratic Bigot, she could not command his fickle affections, and a rival at Beaumanoir, his castle in the woods, made her heart burn with jealousy, and, it is whispered, caused her to stain her hand with blood.

Five miles away, near the little village of Charlesbourg, there was a lonely building which Monsieur Bigot called his hermitage. He was wont to go with a party of boon

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companions to hunt in the neighboring forests and return to the "Hermitage" at night. Wild scenes of revelry took place in this thick-walled, solitary building, though little is known of their character, for the life led in this retreat is veiled in mystery. An episode which appears persistently on the pages of history, and yet is more mysterious and unauthenticated than all the rest, is that of the murder of the Indian girl Caroline.<sup>1</sup>

The intendant was one day following an old bear in the vicinity of Beaumanoir, and in his quest was led over hills and through ravines, on and on, until he found himself separated from his companions. Eagerly he sought a path that would lead him out of the labyrinth, but in vain. Realizing that he was lost, he stood pondering over his

<sup>1</sup> The story of Caroline is taken from a French writer who is supposed to have heard it from the lips of his grandfather.

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luckless position, when his alert ear detected the sound of footsteps near him. A slight and graceful woman stood before him, with raven tresses, eyes black as night, a delicate skin, and arrayed in a garment of spotless white. It was an Indian girl, but her fair skin betrayed a mixed origin. An errant Acadian baron, descendant of one of those referred to in the story of Lady La Tour, had been her father, and a daughter of the Algonquins her mother. Struck by her wonderful beauty, Monsieur Bigot asked her to show him the way to the castle. Thus occurred the first meeting between the beautiful Caroline and the French intendant.

Soon whispers of the presence of a fair Indian maiden at Beaumanoir reached the ears of the people of Quebec, and among others those of the "sultana," Madame de Pean. One night, when the hall clock in the great castle had just struck eleven, and silence reigned throughout the place, the

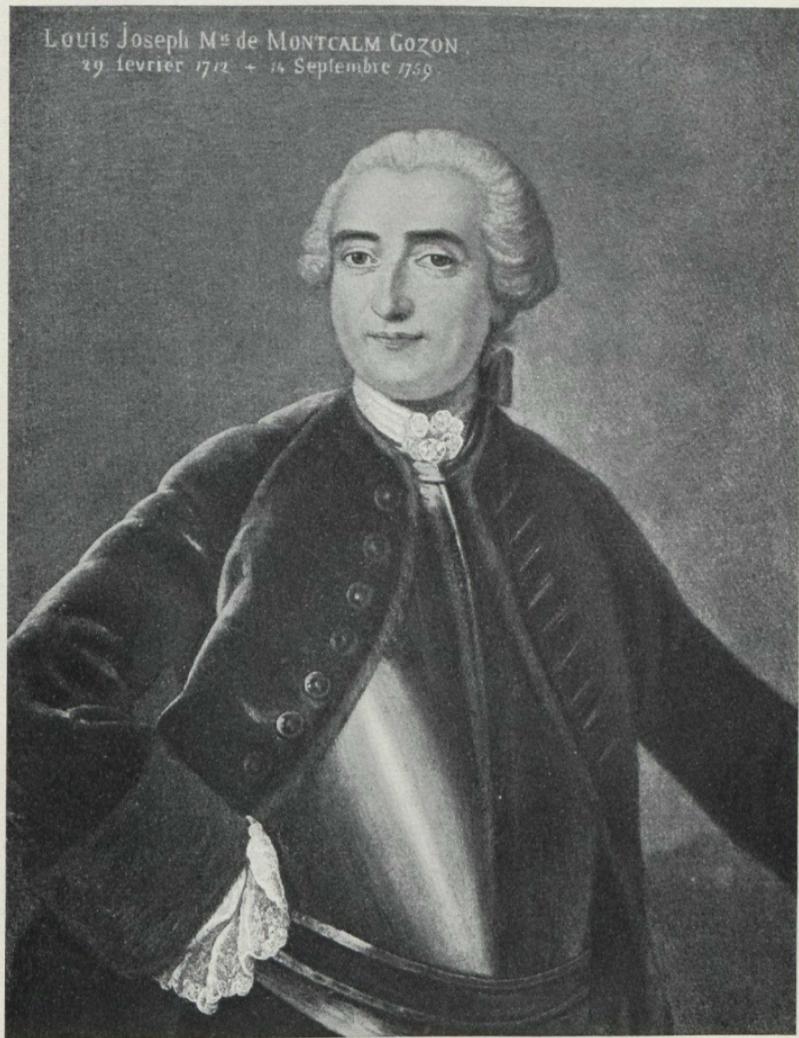
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Indian girl's room was burst into, a masked person stood at her bedside, and without a word plunged a dagger into her heart. Uttering a piercing shriek, the victim leaped into the air and fell heavily upon the floor. The intendant rushed upstairs, raised the dying girl, who pointed to the weapon still in the wound and then expired. Some of the inmates of the house fancied they had seen the figure of a woman run down the secret stairs and disappear, but a profound mystery surrounds the tragedy to this day. Caroline was buried in the cellar of the castle and the letter "C" was engraved on the tombstone. This monument to an ill-starred love in Quebec's days of chivalry remained until less than half a century ago, but now nothing but a heap of ruins, covered with weeds and rank grass, recalls to the eye of the tourist the tragedy of Beaumanoir.

The death of the hapless Caroline was never publicly investigated. The "king of

*Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm-Gozon de Saint-Véran*

LOUIS JOSEPH M<sup>re</sup> de MONTCALM GOZON  
29 fevrier 1712 + 14 Septembre 1759



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knaves" dared not have his dark deeds exposed to the light. For ten years he and Madame de Pean continued their career.

Bigot was passing the evening with her when the despatches were brought announcing that the English were at the gates of Quebec. The noble Montcalm had struggled in vain against the ruinous administration of him and his associates, and had turned away in disgust from the artificiality and corruption which they had introduced into the society of the colony.

The meeting of the two heroes, Montcalm and Wolfe, on the Plains of Abraham, is too well known to need repeating here. Supported by two soldiers on either side of his horse, the dying Montcalm passed through one of the city gates on his retreat from the victorious English. "My God!" cried one of a group of women, "My God! the Marquis is killed!" "It's nothing, it's noth-

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ing," replied Montcalm, "don't be troubled for me, my good friends."

The next evening a sorrowful escort of soldiers marched up the narrow streets of Quebec bearing the body of their chief to the chapel of the Ursuline seminary on Parloir Street. It was deposited there in a large cavity made in the floor by an exploding English bomb. There may be seen to-day the memorial slab which marks the resting-place of one whom fate had destined to be the last worthy representative of a great kingdom in America.

After the fall of New France the infamous Bigot returned to the motherland. Here he was thrown into the Bastille where he remained for eleven months. His trial in 1763 attracted the attention of all Europe, and with that of the others connected with his frauds, lasted three years. He escaped with a light sentence of banishment to Bordeaux, where he passed the rest of his life in ease

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and comfort. Major Pean, his tool, was obliged to make a restitution to the French government of six hundred thousand francs.

And the fair Angélique, having discarded both her husband and her lover on hearing of their downfall, was left behind in Quebec, now filled with the English conquerors. She would fain have crossed the sea also, to take up her residence under the very shadows of the palace of Versailles, there to become the rival of La Pompadour herself. But the latter, hearing of her intentions, determined to thwart her in this ambition, for rumors of the allurements of the Quebec siren had long since reached her ears. She forbade her to cross the boundaries of France, threatening, if her commands were disregarded, to have her imprisoned. Angélique was obliged to tarry in Quebec, where she shone on in undiminished splendor and magnificence until within two decades of the nineteenth century.

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Louis XV. is said to have slept peacefully after ceding to the King of England, at Madame de Pompadour's instigation, the "few acres of snow," known as New France. The pious missionaries, who made the first white man's tracks in the forests; the hardy Champlain and his long line of successors in the eternal warfare of civilization against savagery; the intrepid explorers who opened a vast continent to future generations of Americans; the dogged settler who hewed his way into a home through snow and ice and the insurmountable obstacles of a northern wilderness; and the groups of pioneer women who made civilized life a possibility in this land of barbarism; they, too, slept on peacefully in their graves. Their lives were monuments in themselves, their deeds commemorative inscriptions which no temporal change in their adopted land could efface.