

LIFE
OF
M^{DE} D'YOUVILLE.



Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in
the year 1896, by the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns),
Montreal, at the Department of Agriculture.



Tableau du temps.

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Rebel sculp^t

MARIE-MARGUERITE DUFROST DE LAJEMMERAIS

VEUVE D'YOUVILLE

fondatrice des Sœurs de la Charité de Villemarie,
née le 15 Octobre 1701, décédée le 23 Décembre 1771.

MARY MARGARET D'YOUVILLE

(née Dufrost de Lajemmerais)

foundress of the grey-nunnery at Villemarie (Montreal)

Born Oct. 15th 1701 died Dec^r 23rd 1771.

LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE M.-M. DUFROST DE LAJEMMERAIS,
M^{DE} D'YOUVILLE,

FOUNDRESS
OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

(CALLED GREY NUNS)
OF MONTREAL, CANADA.

BY
REV. D. S. RAMSAY, LATE RECTOR OF ST. BEDE'S, SO. SHIELDS,
AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. AIDAN,
COUNTY OF DURHAM, ENGLAND.



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PREFACE.

To write the life of a venerable servant of God, foundress of a religious community, would be, under all circumstances, a grateful task; but it was peculiarly so to me when asked some months ago, by M^{de} d'Youville's spiritual daughters—the Grey Nuns of Montreal—to undertake, for the first time in English, an edition of the life of their foundress.

Several interesting biographies of M^{de} d'Youville have already been written in French. Her son the Abbé Dufrost, P. P., of Boucherville, left us a life of his mother; even originally this must have been somewhat fragmentary, and, moreover, a portion of it has unfortunately been lost.

The next Life of M^{de} d'Youville was

written early in the present century by the Abbé Satin, priest of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, for years chaplain to the Grey Nuns, and who so enjoyed the opportunity of frequently conversing with sisters who had been the companions of M^{de} d'Youville, and had received from her their training in religious life.

These two biographies have remained in manuscript; but, in 1852, an able writer—who although anonymous, is so well known that there can be no indiscretion in naming him, the Abbé Faillon, P. S. S.—published a very complete and, indeed, elaborate life of this venerable servant of God.

My first thought was to translate this work into English; however, the reverend ladies seemed to prefer that it should be rewritten rather than translated.

In fulfilling their wish,—although the present Life is considerably shorter than the one published in 1852,—I have en-

deavored, as far as lay in my power, to omit, substantially speaking, no circumstance or event connected with the life of this venerable servant of God, recorded by previous writers.

Those desirous of further information respecting M^{de} d'Youville's Breton ancestors would do well to consult Count de Palys' little work, printed at Rennes, in 1894.

In conclusion, I would refer my readers to the Appendix, for which they and I have to thank one of the reverend sisters. It contains a highly graphic description of the charitable and heroic succour afforded by the Grey Nuns and other religious communities to the victims of the Irish famine of 1847, whom the consequent terrible epidemic followed to Canada. It includes, also, an interesting account of the recent development of the community founded by M^{de} d'Youville.

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OF THE
VENERABLE M.-M. DUFROST DE LAJEMMERAIS,
M^{DE} D'YOUVILLE,
FOUNDRRESS
OF THE GREY NUNS OF CANADA.

CHAPTER I.

Early life of M^{de} d'Youville.— God makes known to her that she is called to form a new Institute and to restore the General Hospital of Villemarie.

M^{de} d'Youville,—Mary-Margaret Dufrost de Lajemmerais,—the subject of this biographical sketch, was born at Varennes, Verchères County, Canada, on October 15, 1701. Her father, a gentleman of Brittany, cadet of the family Dufrost de Lajemmerais or La Gesmerais, parish of Medreac, diocese of St. Malo (now of Rennes),

after serving for some time as midshipman at Rochefort, was in 1687 appointed * ensign to a regiment engaged in a campaign against the Iroquois of New France, now called Canada.

The young Frenchman soon fought his way to a lieutenancy, and won honorable mention in a letter from the Marchioness of Vaudreuil to the Minister of Marine. She says: "M. de Lajemmerais has served with distinction in the war against the Iroquois, many times running the risk of being taken prisoner and burned alive by those barbarians."

De Lajemmerais having thus gained distinction as a soldier, married, January 18, 1701, Mary, daughter of René Gauthier de Varennes, afterwards Governor of Three Rivers, and granddaughter of a former Governor, Peter Boucher de Boucherville. He died eight years later, leaving to his widow the care of six children,—three boys, the two eldest of whom, Charles and Joseph, she succeeded in educating for the priesthood, and who became respectively parish priests of Verchères and of La Sainte Famille in the Island of Orleans; the third, Christopher, entered the army as ensign.

* Mde d'Youville, by Count de Palys, Vice President of the Archeological society of Ille-et-Villaine.

Printed by J. Plihon et L. Hervé, Rennes, 1894.

and died, in the winter of 1735, of hardship and fatigue, at Fort Maurepas on Lake Winnipeg,—and three daughters, Mary-Margaret, the subject of this biography; Mary Louise, who married Ignatius Gamelin; and Mary-Clemence who married Peter Gamelin—Maugras. All three ladies were blessed with sons and other descendants who entered the ranks of the Canadian clergy. M^{de} Gamelin-Maugras was the great-grandmother of a distinguished and much beloved prelate, the late Mgr. Taché, Archbishop of St. Boniface, Manitoba.

Divine Providence designed Mary-Margaret to be foundress of an institution for the care of the poor, and the better to fit her for such a vocation, made her from her infancy pass through the crucible of suffering and trial.

Her father, like most of the other French gentlemen of the period who came as settlers to Canada, brought little with him but his sword and a stout heart. Promoted, in 1705, to the rank of captain, M. de Lajemmerais' salary afforded him, no doubt, a competency during life; but on his death, in 1708, his widow and six children, of whom Mary-Margaret, then in her seventh year, was the eldest, were left almost destitute.

Although the Marquis of Vaudreuil, Governor

General, and the Intendant, M. Raudot, interested themselves in their behalf, it was only some time afterwards that M^{de} de Lajemmerais obtained a pension of fifty crowns, the ordinary grant from the King to officers' widows.

Besides the sympathy shown the family in their distress by such high officials as the Governor and the Intendant, other friends came to their aid; and thus M^{de} de Lajemmerais was enabled to place Mary-Margaret, then eleven years old, as a pupil in the convent of the Ursuline Nuns of Quebec, * where she spent two years and made her first communion.

On her return home, the young lady proved by her diligence in assisting her mother in all domestic cares, how much she had profited by her convent training.

* " One of the most distinguished of our pupils of that period was Mlle. Dufrost de Lajemmerais. She came to us in her eleventh year—gentle, religious, candid and intelligent—and soon won the sympathy of all. Never losing a moment herself, if she noticed among her companions less assiduity, she would say to herself: ' These young ladies are better off than I am,—I have no father, and my poor mother waits with anxiety my return home,' and redoubled her activity and application to study.After remaining two years with us, Mlle. de Lajemmerais returned to her home, where her mother needed, more than ever, that angel of consolation. "

Annals of the Ursuline Nuns of Quebec, page 176, Vol. II

Her engaging manners, accompanied by an air of thoughtfulness and intelligence beyond her years, a certain aptitude for household management, perfect obedience to her mother's wishes, all these good qualities sweetened the daily trials and anxieties her mother experienced in bringing up and educating her children.

Mary-Margaret, though herself so young, seemed already like a second mother to her brothers and sisters. Her affection gained their confidence; her prudence and a certain dignity which was natural to her, their respect; she consoled them in all the troubles—real or imaginary—which five little people living under the same roof are sure to create for one another.

God designed her to be instrumental in rendering piety attractive to people of the world, and endowed her with those exterior graces of mind and person which win esteem and affection.

God's time had not yet come, and M^{lle} de Lajemmerais, like most other young people of her age and station, was delighted with the attention given her, and, although always modest in dress and deportment, showed herself anxious to please.

Several gentlemen of the best families were

among her admirers, and—humanly speaking—it was likely she would soon make a matrimonial alliance desirable from a worldly point of view, when a change took place in her prospects by her mother's becoming engaged to, and, soon afterwards, marrying M. T. Sullivan, or Silvain, an Irish gentleman and a widower without fortune, and already encumbered with a numerous family. However, as we see from the Marquis of Vaudreuil's correspondence with the French Minister, M. Silvain was afterwards useful to the family by assisting in the maintenance and education of his step-children. In carrying out this object, he even deprived himself of some of the necessaries of life.

In 1722, the subject of this biography espoused a gentleman of Montreal, possessed of some fortune, M. Francis-Magdalen d'Youville. They were married in the parish church of Montreal, on August 12th, by M. Priat, priest of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, and Vicar General to the Bishop of Quebec.

If good looks and other exterior gifts could secure joy here below, it would have been difficult to find a happier union, for M. d'Youville was, as regards outward advantages, in nowise inferior to his bride, being considered one of the handsomest men of his time.

But the marriage which seemed to promise M^{de} d'Youville worldly happiness, was, on the contrary, the beginning of such crosses and sufferings as soon entirely detached her from worldly vanities, and served to prepare her as the instrument of God's designs.

She had now to bid farewell to the paternal dwelling at Varennes, and to take up her abode with her mother-in-law at Montreal. Here worrying times awaited her. Old age had rendered that lady so irritable that visitors were practically excluded from the house. M^{de} d'Youville's life was as solitary as that of the cloister, a continual tête-à-tête with a peevish and capricious mother-in-law not tending to enliven it.

The old lady died at the end of a few years and left a considerable fortune. Her daughter-in-law could now hope for happier days, but in this she was disappointed, for her husband soon squandered in amusements, not only his own fortune, but her's also; so that she was obliged to have recourse to painful manual labor for the support of the family. In addition to this, M. d'Youville was cold in character, and showed no more concern for the distress he had brought on his wife, or the bodily infirmities to which he saw she was subjected, than if she had been a mere stranger.

Her patience under this ill-treatment was so exemplary that it is said she never reproached her husband with his conduct; nor did she lessen in any degree her regard and kindness towards him.

These trials were, in the hands of divine Providence, the means by which she learned the all-important lesson, that true happiness is to be found only in God's service.

At first she did not understand how sweet is the resignation of a loving soul, chastened by adversity; but, after five years of married life, overcome by the secret inspirations of grace, and convinced, at last, that God alone is our consolation and support, she determined to renounce the vain maxims of the world, and to embrace a devout life.

For this purpose she placed herself under the direction of M. de Lescoat, a Sulpician, and the parish priest of Montreal, whom Providence had selected to be her guide on the thorny road to perfection, and to point out to her the work to which she was called.

Three years afterwards M. d'Youville died of pleurisy, after an illness of only a few days, at the early age of thirty-one.

This event, which some might have considered a relief, caused M^{de} d'Youville intense grief. For years, the mention of her husband's

name brought tears to her eyes. A heart so full of tenderness and generosity is to be admired.

M. d'Youville's death left her burdened with a considerable debt and the care of her two little boys, the survivors of five children,—a sixth was born after her husband's death, but lived only a short time.

In the midst of this desolation and poverty to which she was reduced by God's will, M^{de} d'Youville was apprised of her vocation as if by divine inspiration. Her director, M. de Lescoat, said one day to her: "Child, be consoled, for God calls you to a great work, and to raise up a falling house."

That work was the establishment of the Sisters of Charity, since called the Grey Nuns, the falling house, the General Hospital of Villemarie, now Montreal.

On hearing these words, M^{de} d'Youville's soul was filled with a marvellous grace. This was the beginning of her especial lifelong devotion towards the person of the ETERNAL FATHER, Who watches continually over the least of His creatures, and who is called in the inspired words of St. Paul, "The Father of mercies and the God of all consolation." Together with this singular inspiration and as a part of it, she felt her heart glowing with all a mother's love

for the poor, which her own sorrows and desolation seemed only to heighten. These were the means by which divine Providence drew her tenderly but forcibly towards her destined work.

M^{de} d'Youville began her labor of love by taking up a small business, hoping thus to assure the means of educating her boys and of succouring the poor. Several influential merchants of the town came to the assistance of the lonely widow; her little trade, with God's blessing, so increased that she was enabled to pay off her husband's debts, and, at the same time, to satisfy her own burning love for the poor. These things she accomplished without neglecting the care of her two sons, who were, at this time, receiving an education which fitted them eventually for the priesthood. *

She arose each day at an early hour to assist at the Divine Sacrifice—the most inclement weather never interrupting this devotion—and each afternoon, so far as her different occupa-

* M. Joseph-François d'Youville, ordained in 1747; became parish priest of Saint-Ours in 1750; and died in 1778, in his 54th year.

M. Charles-Magdalen d'Youville-Dufrost, ordained in 1752; was parish priest of Pointe-Levis from 1766 to 1774; named Vicar General in 1775; became parish priest of Boucherville in 1790; and died there in his 60th year.

tions permitted, she endeavored to spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament.

She visited the poor in their sickness, * and even went, at the advice of M. de Lescoat, to the General Hospital, that she might mend the clothes of the infirm, who were reduced to a state of wretchedness, misery and dirt, that excited general compassion. This was the institution which M. de Lescoat had in view, when he said to M^{de} d'Youville that God designed she should raise up a falling house.

M. de Lescoat died in 1733. M^{de} d'Youville lost in him the confessor who had been for seven years her spiritual guide. She chose as director, M. Normant du Faradon, Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, whom God, no doubt, inspired to manifest to His handmaid His divine will, and who by position, at the same time, was a fit instrument to assist M^{de} d'Youville in the accomplishment there of. As Superior of the Seminary, this able and excellent priest was, *ex-officio*, Rector of the parish of Notre-Dame, and representative of the Seigniors of the Island of Montreal, besides being, by the Bishop's appointment, Vicar General.

* M. Charles d'Youville-Dufrost, her son, says of her: "It was with edification that she was seen at this time, begging from door to door for the burial of criminals." *Manuscript Life of M^{de} d'Youville by her son Charles.*

No one, therefore, could feel more anxious that an institution which had been erected for the poor of his parish, seigniory and vicariate should not fall to the ground.

CHAPTER II.

Foundation and decline of the General Hospital. — M^{de} d'Youville and her companions rent a house to receive the poor of both sexes. — Persecutions to which these ladies are subjected. — The Governor of Montreal and others petition against M. Normant's conduct as Vicar General respecting the General Hospital.

The General Hospital of Montreal was founded in 1694, by three devout laymen, MM. Charon, Le Ber and Fredin, with the view to promote God's glory by establishing a Community of Hospitallers for the service of poor and infirm men.

At its inception, this work appeared to flourish; but although doubtlessly begun from the purest motives of charity, it lacked an essential condition to success; for, as M. Bourdoise truly said: "The establishment in the Church of a new institute is not a frivolous or common undertaking, and, consequently,

God does not indifferently give His Spirit for such to all sorts of persons."

Time showed in the present instance that this condition was wanting; the community had dwindled to five, three of whom were very aged, and none possessed the capacity for such an undertaking. The interests of religion and charity were at stake, and it was imperative to place the hospital under better management.

M. Normant, like M. de Lescoat, did not doubt that M^{de} d'Youville * was the one chosen by divine Providence for this end.

The better to prepare her for the work, and as a trial of her constancy, this prudent director advised her to take some of the poor to live with her. Associates were a necessity. The first of these was M^{lle} Louise Thaumur-Lasource, the daughter of a Montreal physician. M^{de} d'Youville requested her to join in a novena of prayer, and daily visit the tomb of M. de Lescoat, who had died in the odor of sanctity, to ascertain God's will respecting their vocation. These pious exercises finished, they

* Besides her care of the poor, Mde d'Youville had at this time successively held, in the confraternity of the Holy Family, the offices of instructor of postulants, treasurer, assistant and superior. (*Régistre de la confrérie de la Sainte Famille, années 1738, 1741, 1747*).

called upon M. Normant; he spoke to them of the happiness of those who ministered to the Saviour in the person of His poor. M^{de} d'Youville, deeply moved by his words, resolved to devote herself thenceforward to this holy work, — M^{lle} Thaumur remaining, for the present, undecided.

Two other young ladies, M^{lle} Demers and M^{lle} Cusson, now joined M^{de} d'Youville. M^{lle} Thaumur then decided to do likewise. The four ladies rented a house and began by receiving four or five poor people, which number shortly rose to ten. This beginning was made October 30, 1738. On entering their humble dwelling they knelt at the foot of a little statue of Our Lady,* and M^{de} d'Youville, in the name of herself and her companions begged that Holy Mother of the poor to bless their little society and their undertaking.

She pronounced these words in a firm tone, without any visible mark of emotion, as was also the case with M^{lle} Demers; but M^{lle} Cusson and Thaumur could not restrain their tears.

That very day M. Normant exhorted them to patience, telling them how much they would

* This beautiful statuette in brass is religiously preserved by the reverend sisters in their convent, in Montreal.

have to suffer in the holy work they had undertaken for God's poor. Such an exhortation was all the more necessary, as a strong opposition was already formed against them in the town, and was on the eve of bursting forth in a very painful manner.

The following day, the Feast of All-Saints, as they left the house on their way to the parish church, they were surrounded by an angry crowd jeering at them in abusive language, and even pelting them with stones. To this unjust and outrageous behavior the pious ladies replied only by gentleness and patience. But their charitable meekness had not the effect of putting an end to the disorders, — no one seeming to take their part, even some of M^{de} d'Youville's own relatives declaring themselves in favor of their persecutors.

Worse still, the most mischievous calumnies were invented and circulated against them, — their traducers going so far as to assert that, in contempt both of the ecclesiastical law and of the King's ordinances, these ladies sold intoxicating liquor to the Indians, and even made use of it themselves.

Strange to say, these absurd calumnies were the origin of their being called "Les Sœurs Grises." The Sisters of Charity in France had, in some towns, been called "Sœurs Grises"

because of their grey costume; but the word "gris" has two meanings: *grey* and *tipsy*; and in the latter unfavorable sense it was first applied to our good nuns. They humbly accepted the name, and have made it honored and esteemed.

These accusations became so public that they reached the ears of the Governor General, M. de Beauharnois; they were so vigorously maintained and generally believed that a Recollet (or Franciscan) Father went so far as to turn M^{de} d'Youville and her companions away from the altar, a step a Catholic priest is justified in taking only towards public and scandalous sinners.

But this was not all: a petition, signed by the Governor of Montreal, by eight officers and twenty civilians, was sent to the Minister in France, complaining that M. Normant, as Vicar General, would not allow the hospitallers to recruit their members, so that at the extinction of this brotherhood, the gentlemen of the Seminary, as Seignors, might give possession of the General Hospital to M^{de} d'Youville and her companions.

The petition went on to say, that to prevent the execution of such a design on the part of the Seminary, the Brothers of the Christian schools should be induced to incorporate the

hospitallers with themselves, and by this means, save the latter from extinction. This was an impracticable scheme, and one that the Christian Brothers could never have carried out,— the object of their institute not being the care of hospitals, but of schools. The fear, however, that the Seminary might take possession of the hospital and hand it over to M^{de} d'Youville, was the cause of this incoherent petition and of the ill-treatment to which she and her companions were subjected.

CHAPTER III.

Death of M^{lle} Cusson. — Various trials permitted by divine Providence to prepare M^{de} d'Youville and her companions for the work to which they are called.

Nothing disheartened by the animosity shown them, M^{de} d'Youville and her companions courageously and devotedly bent every energy to what they believed was the will of God.

During the nine succeeding years, — that is till 1747, the year in which the administrators of the General Hospital asked her to take charge of it, *temporarily*, — food and clothing for the poor were obtained out of their earnings at sewing; and to prolong their hours of labor, early dawn saw them at daily mass in the parish church, no matter how inclement the weather. Nearly three years of this severe life told at last upon M^{lle} Cusson: she contracted pneumonia and died, after a lingering illness,

Feb. 20, 1741. In her death, as in her life of fervor and patience, she gave great edification to her companions.

M^{de} d'Youville was thus left with only two associates, M^{lle} Thaumur-Lasource and M^{lle} Demers, and this began a series of trials that were to test M^{de} d'Youville and fit her for her vocation.

M. Normant fell ill, and lay lingering between life and death. He was their guide and protector, the mainstay of their undertaking. His influence, zeal and direction were indispensable in the approaching struggle against their united adversaries. There was no one to replace him, and the labor and sacrifices of years would be lost. All seemed dark and hopeless.

In this distressing crisis, M^{de} d'Youville put her entire confidence, as in former trials, in the Father of pity, promising to get from France a painting of the ETERNAL FATHER, and to burn a candle before the Blessed Sacrament each year on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady. The prayers of the three supplicants were at length answered, and M. Normant recovered.

M^{de} d'Youville herself was then stricken with an ailment of the knee, and for six or seven years, — during which period three new members joined the little community, — she was

crippled and suffered excruciating pain. She could not leave her chair; she had to be carried to hear mass, or when she went out on business. Three surgeons treated her in vain; prayers and pilgrimages brought no relief; she was pronounced incurable. But the hand of God was with her: He suddenly and completely restored her to health without any human agency.

Another cross followed almost immediately. During the night of January 30, 1745, a fire broke out and made such headway that the unfortunate inmates were unable to save anything; they barely escaped with their lives and the few articles of clothing they could hurriedly lay their hands upon. In the midst of this calamity, M^{de} d'Youville's calmness did not forsake her; her first care was to remove her companions and her poor out of danger; and more anxious for the interests of others than for her own, she took every precaution to prevent the flames from spreading to the neighboring houses. It was a touching sight to behold this tender mother, surrounded by her unfortunate poor, half-naked, barefooted, homeless and helpless, in the bitter cold of the deep winter snow. They turned to her, and besought her not to abandon them; she gathered them about her and consoled them with the assurance

that ever and always, to the end of her life, she would love and care for them and treat them as her own children. In spite of all her vigilance, one life was lost,—that of a poor insane girl who went back to get her *sabots*, and perished in the flames.

Alas! a disaster that should have touched a chord of pity in the hardest hearts, seemed only to awaken old prejudices among the spectators. An angry mob surrounded them, jeering and shouting that this calamity was God's judgment upon them for their crimes, and especially for selling drink to the Indians.

These cruel words and the sight of her house in flames sank the conviction deep in M^{de} d'Youville's heart that in God alone could she find consolation, in Him alone should she trust, to Him alone must she turn for help and protection to achieve her end. She lifted up her heart to adore His wise and inscrutable ways, and accepted this latest calamity as a monition to rise to higher and greater perfection. Up to the present, the sisters had retained possession of their own goods and belongings, and had put in common merely their earnings. God now seemed to strip them of their all, to bring them, for the future, to the practice of holy poverty and the life in common of the early Christians. There, in the light of the last embers of the ruin,

M^{de} d'Youville turned to her companions: "We have lived in too much ease," she said, "perhaps we have been too fond of earthly comforts; for the future, we shall live in common and more poorly."

These words went home to the hearts of all; they were the expression of a longing each one had felt for a life of holiness and poverty; and on that eventful night, by the ashes of their home, the heroic resolution was taken, and immediately put into execution. On Feb. 2nd. M. Normant drew up the act of renouncement, and the six members signed it. It is still kept in the archives of the hospital; it is the basis of this now prosperous community, and is signed by each sister on making her profession. It registers the promise to leave the world, to devote life, time and toil to the care of the poor, to transfer to them all worldly possessions, and to live in ties of charity and obedience under a common rule.

M. Fonblanche, a rich merchant of the town, provided them with a house at once; other charitable persons gave them beds and what furniture was urgently needed, and the Seminary supplied them with food for upwards of fifteen months.

As this house was too small for the community and the poor, they moved into another,

which they rented for three years. M. Boisberthelot de Beaucourt, the Governor of Montreal, who had always been opposed to their institution, then decided to take this same house for his residence. By an act of violence and injustice, he ordered them to leave, alleging as an excuse that it was better adapted for a Governor's residence than for a hospital, and threatened to call out the troops if they hesitated. They were powerless to resist, and left the house, accepting a temporary shelter from a zealous lady, M^de de Lacorne. They finally settled in a house near the parish church of Notre-Dame, whence they were to move into the General Hospital. While in this house, M^de d'Youville had an attack of so severe an illness that her life was despaired of; and, as a pious writer has put it, the community was *à deux doigts de sa ruine*,—half a palm from ruin. But God, in answer to the earnest prayer of the poor and of the sisters, restored her partially to health,—her complete recovery did not take place until a later date.

CHAPTER IV.

The authorities place M^{de} d'Youville temporarily in charge of the General Hospital.

While M^{de} d'Youville and her companions labored under so many difficulties in carrying out their holy vocation, M. Normant was using his influence to increase their field of usefulness, by obtaining for them the direction of the General Hospital. He had, on several occasions, explained to the Governor General and the Intendant, how much good would thereby accrue to the people of Montreal. However, powerful influences were at work against such an arrangement, as we see from the correspondence which took place on the subject between the Governor General and the Intendant on one side, and the French Minister on the other.

The reasons given by M. Normant had their weight with the latter; but, to weaken their

effect, M. Normant was accused of dissuading young men from joining the community of the General Hospital. He could not, indeed, have acted otherwise. Mgr. Dosquet, bishop of Quebec from 1733 to 1739, had prohibited the brotherhood receiving new members, because incapable either of imparting the religious spirit to their novices, or of providing them even necessary subsistence. This prohibition had not been cancelled by his successor, the late Mgr. de l'Aube-Rivière, who died on the 20th of July, 1740, after an episcopate of only eight months. Hence the Governor and the Intendant wrote to the Minister that it would be preferable to await the arrival of the new bishop, Mgr. de Pontbriand. Yet, even after the arrival of this prelate, — consecrated April 9, 1741, — years were to elapse before any definite step would be taken with reference to the hospital.

It would only weary our readers were we to attempt a narrative of the different schemes proposed, or to endeavor to trace the tedious correspondence to which this matter gave rise.

At a time when steamers and locomotives were unknown, and the roads for a great part of the year all but impassable, a journey from Montreal to Quebec was a serious undertaking; while a reference to Versailles meant, at least, a delay of five or six months; and such, it seems,

had frequently to be made, as the King* and his Minister took a very active interest in the question whether it was advisable to found a new community of nuns in Canada.

In the meantime, the condition of the General Hospital went from bad to worse. The number of the brothers was reduced to two—so aged as to be quite unfit for the care of the four poor inmates supposed to be in their charge. In the spring of 1747, the Minister, writing to the new bishop, Mgr. de Pontbriand, says: “In the present situation of the hospital it becomes each day more pressing that steps be taken to prevent its entire ruin...as soon as Marquis de Lajonquière (the lately appointed Governor General) arrives in the colony, I trust, in conjunction with him and M. Hocquart (the Intendant), you may be able to devise a scheme which will obtain the royal consent.”

M. de Beauharnois learned soon afterwards that the ship on which M. de Lajonquière sailed for Canada had been captured by the English, and the new Governor made prisoner. He, the Bishop, and the Intendant, now accept-

* Louis XV. feared that if a community of nuns were established in Canada which should not be self-supporting, the royal purse-strings might have to be unloosed in its behalf.

ed the hospitallers' resignation, tendered two years before, and, on the 27th of August, 1747, offered M^{de} d'Youville *temporarily* the administration of the hospital, with the promise, however, that if she accepted, they would use their influence with the King to have the institution placed permanently in her and her companions' charge.

In this agreement it was stipulated that M^{de} d'Youville was to receive and account for the revenues of the hospital; the repairs judged necessary by experts, in presence of the King's attorney, were to be made; and she, her companions, their poor, and the two aged brothers, left to their care, should be provided for out of the revenues of the hospital, or at the public expense.

The buildings of the hospital had fallen into so dilapidated a condition, that thirteen years previous to this, in 1734, when the Hôtel-Dieu was destroyed by fire, the Governor General and the Intendant had concluded it would cost too much to repair them for the reception of the religious and their sick, thus left without a shelter; and that, as a question of economy, it would be better to hire houses in the town for this purpose. Since that date, the buildings had been allowed still further to deteriorate. To give an idea of their condition, we may

mention that for the repair of the windows, twelve hundred panes of glass were required.

These extensive repairs completed, our little community and their poor took possession on the 7th of October, 1747.

The names of the associates at that time were Demoiselles Thaumur, Demers, Rainville, Laforme and Veronneau. M^{de} d'Youville was also accompanied by M^{lle} Despins * who had lived with her as a boarder for nine years. M^{de} d'Youville was, however, so infirm that she had to be carried to her new dwelling in a cart.

Up to this time, the General Hospital, improperly so called, had sheltered only men; it now became a refuge for both sexes, and in the very first year was able to receive, besides old people, invalid soldiers, the insane, incurables, orphans and abandoned children.

Another aim of M^{de} d'Youville's large-hearted charity was the reformation of fallen women.

M. Déat, a zealous member of the Seminary, and parish priest of Montreal, had already, in 1744, applied to the French Minister in behalf of those unhappy women; but war, with its

* This lady eventually joined the community, and succeeded M^{de} d'Youville as Superior.

attendant expenses, had prevented anything being done, except what the zeal of the clergy and the vigilance of the police could accomplish.

M^{de} d'Youville had twelve rooms in the upper part of the hospital prepared for this purpose. These rooms were called "Jericho," the name of a house formerly built by the Seminary for the same object.

The threats and menaces to which this good work subjected her did not in any way diminish her zeal. Among other instances of her intrepidity, her son relates that a soldier enraged at finding the unhappy victim of his passions taken from him, went to the hospital armed with a pistol, with the intention of shooting M^{de} d'Youville. One of the community hastily warned the good mother of her danger, begging her to seek safety in flight; but, instead, M^{de} d'Youville went to meet the intending assassin, whom her unassuming yet courageous air so completely intimidated, that he retired without saying a word.*

To support these different good works, M^{de} d'Youville and her companions labored unremittingly with their needle. The fruit of their industry, added to the revenue of the house and

* Manuscript life of M^{de} d'Youville, by her son, Rev. C. Dufrost.

the alms of charitable friends, sufficed for daily expenses.

M. Déat, parish priest, brought contributions to defray the expenses of "Jericho," and generous assistance was given to the hospital, not only by the people of Montreal, formerly so hostile, and now altogether favorable to M^{de} d'Youville, but by the surrounding parishes of Laprairie, Longueuil, Varennes, Verchères, etc. All these alms M^{de} d'Youville devoted to the support of the poor; but, as she had been placed in charge of outlying farms—the property of the hospital,—she was obliged to contract a debt in order to restore ruined buildings, to procure necessary implements and effect other equally indispensable improvements.

This little company, living together the more easily and surely to practice the divine counsels, could not as yet be entitled a religious community, for it had not received ecclesiastical recognition. Nevertheless, its associates were, from the very beginning, models of religious life.

M. Satin, P. S. S., chaplain to the Grey Nuns from 1818 to 1836, thus speaks of M^{de} d'Youville and her companions in the days before their institute had received episcopal sanction: "There was nothing in their dress, in spite of its extreme simplicity both in form and mate-

rial, that distinguished them from ordinary secular persons, except that each one wore a cincture, and that the art of the *coiffeur* was unknown; the hair, so as to neither nourish vanity nor attract observation, was cut short."

All that regarded every day life, such as the hours of rising and retiring to rest, the observance of silence, vocal and mental prayer, reading and other spiritual exercises, — the common table, the service of the poor, was regulated with precision. In their intercourse with one another, these ladies were cordial, deferential and courteous; towards strangers, considerate and kind. In the difficult matter of paying visits, the associates allowed themselves to be guided entirely by the prudent counsels of her, more mother than superior, to whom they yielded implicit obedience. They exercised continual humility of the heart and mortification of the senses, the root and source of the highest virtue. A holy emulation in the path of religious perfection produced that childlike and candid simplicity which banishes affectation, peculiarity of view and egotism, as well as all prying investigation into the motives or conduct of others. The esteem in which these ladies held poverty, obedience and chastity was such, that they had privately bound themselves by vow to the strict observance of these virtues.

Such excellent dispositions were kept alive and received a daily increase by frequent retreats, fidelity to spiritual exercises and the daily practice of virtue. Their exemplary lives, and above all, their charitable devotion to the service of the poor — their especial vocation — were the causes which led to the consideration and respect now universally felt for M^{de} d'Youville and her companions.

CHAPTER V.

Harsh and unjust treatment of M^{de} d'Youville by M. Bigot. — Ordinance published at Montreal uniting its Hospital to that of Quebec. — M^{de} d'Youville and others petition against the ordinance.

The importance of these undertakings and improvements, the growth of the hospital from the increase in number both of associates and of the poor, and the debt which had accumulated previous to M^{de} d'Youville's entering in charge, caused great alarm to the authorities in Canada and at the Court.

The Canadian administration had undergone a change: M. de Lajonquière, set free by the English, was on the point of arriving in the colony; M. Bigot had succeeded M. Hocquart in the office of Intendant.

The French minister had already written (Feb. 12, 1748) to the Intendant that it was, no doubt, desirable to save the Montreal Hos-

pital from ruin, and that M^{de} d'Youville seemed to succeed in its administration; yet His Majesty could not consent to the establishment of a new order of nuns in Canada.

On his arrival, M. Bigot had visited the hospital and had expressed satisfaction with all he saw; but, some time afterwards, he quite altered his tone and seemed anxious to quarrel with M^{de} d'Youville. In 1750, he wrote to her in harsh terms, finding fault with the way in which the inmates of "Jericho" were treated, and ordering her to receive no more of them without his special permission. The rude expressions of his letter were only the prelude to violent and unjust proceedings.

To meet the views of the Court regarding new communities in Canada, and at the same time to gratify the libertines of Montreal, M. Bigot* had made up his mind to expel M^{de} d'Youville and her companions from the hospital.

According to the wish of the Court, it had been proposed to unite the General Hospital of Quebec to the Hôtel-Dieu of that city; and

* This gentleman was styled in official letters: the King's counsellor, Minister of justice, police, finance and naval affairs for the colony. He was afterwards recalled to France and imprisoned in the Bastille for malversation.

the hospital of which M^{de} d'Youville was in charge to the Hotel-Dieu of Montreal. However, the Bishop in his endeavor to safeguard the communities already established, and to comply, at the same time, with the desire of the Court, sought a middle course in the fusion of the hospital of Montreal with the one in Quebec.

M. Normant, hearing the turn affairs were taking, forwarded to the Bishop, the Governor General and the Intendant, a petition signed by M^{de} d'Youville and her companions, exposing the irreparable injury which the proposed arrangement would cause to the poor of Montreal, for whom the hospital had been built; and that the pious intention of the founders and of those who had contributed to its support, would thereby be frustrated. The petition terminated with the assurance that the petitioners would in three years, if they were left in charge, pay the debt due by the hospital.

On reading the petition, Mgr. de Pontbriand seemed much moved and promised to make known to the Minister the reasons set forth therein in favor of the hospital.

To the Bishop, it was past human hope that M^{de} d'Youville would be able to continue her undertaking; yet he uses these words in writing her: "If God calls you to this work, I

do not doubt He will crown your efforts with success.”

It seems that the new Governor General, M. de Lajonquière, took only a passive part in these proceedings; he was a stranger in the colony and was influenced principally by M. Bigot's opinion, and the latter had made up his mind that the Montreal Hospital and its revenues should be handed over to the Hospital of Quebec.

The French Minister's reply sanctioned M. Bigot's project to the extent of reducing the Montreal Hospital to the footing of an infirmary, with nuns from Quebec in charge. The Letter closes with these words: “His Majesty authorizes you to accomplish this union (of the hospitals) without further instructions, after you have conferred upon it with the Bishop of Quebec.” (Letter of June 14, 1750.) This was not the expected authorization to sell the buildings and possessions of the General Hospital and hand the proceeds to the Quebec community.

The letter to the Bishop of Quebec was less explicit: “If the Quebec Hospital suffices not for all the sick in the colony, the Montreal Hospital may be reduced to an infirmary, in care of two or three nuns from Quebec.” These words were at once construed in their widest

sense and the suppression of the Montreal Hospital was decreed. An ordinance to this effect was signed on October 15, 1750, but to prevent any appeal to France, it was not proclaimed until the last boat of the year had sailed. On November 23, 1750, the public crier published it in the streets of Montreal with the beating of drums. It decreed that all the property movable and immovable of the General Hospital of Montreal should be transferred to the Religious of the hospital in Quebec. These latter had the privilege of selling the buildings at Montreal and the movables of too little value to transport to Quebec.

That morning, M^{de} d'Youville had gone to make some purchases at the market. As she returned she heard her name repeated several times in a loud voice by the public crier. She listened, and her ears caught the words of the ordinance. It was a heavy blow, and seemed to shatter in an instant all her hopes, to overthrow the work dearest to her heart and which had cost the labor and sacrifices of years. Yet M^{de} d'Youville received this painful announcement with the same composed demeanor, the same interior submission which she had shown in her many past trials. She gave remarkable evidence of this same spirit when the bailiff, a few hours later, came to serve on her and her

companions the King's prohibition to make further improvements or repairs in the hospital.

The citizens did not show the like patience and murmured loudly against the authorities—civil and ecclesiastical. The Vicar General wrote to the Bishop: “The ordinance has caused much commotion here, not only because of the beating of drums with which it was announced, but still more by the murmurs, discontent and even abusive language to which it has given rise...an evil way, one must admit, of defending a good cause.”

Two petitions against the execution of the ordinance were now prepared by M. Normant; one was signed by M^{de} d'Youville and her companions, the other by the principal citizens of Montreal, the Governor, M. de Longueuil, the priests of the Seminary, the King's lieutenant, the Major, officers and magistrates, expressing the injustice done to the poor by removing the hospital built for their use, and to its founders and benefactors by frustrating the good work for which they had contributed. The petitions went on to show the illegality, nay, the very nullity of the ordinance, as opposed to the promise Louis XIV. had made in 1692, two years before the establishment of the hospital: that it should be permanent in Montreal, and that

it could not be converted into any other pious work than that contemplated at the time of its foundation.

M^{de} d'Youville was herself the bearer of the petitions, undertaking the journey to Quebec — a distance of 180 miles — at a very inclement season of the year. She was favorably received by the Governor General, who acknowledged that he had signed the ordinance in deference to the opinion of the Intendant, and without, at the moment, foreseeing the injustice done the poor of Montreal. He wrote, soon afterwards, in this tenor, to the French minister. M. Bigot, however, remained unmoved, consequently the ordinance of October had to be put in force, and, on January 10, 1751, M^{de} d'Youville was asked to render an account of her administration. M. Bigot took occasion to treat her with both harshness and injustice, blaming her for increasing the number of poor in the hospital. He declined to accept her accounts, and ordered her to sow the crops on the farms belonging to the hospital before handing them over to the Religious of Quebec, — crops she would not harvest.

M^{de} d'Youville replied in an able and well-reasoned letter to the Intendant. Her words did not produce any impression on M. Bigot. In this answer obstinately he maintained the

unjust position he had taken up, and positively refused to accept her accounts.

M^{de} d'Youville wrote to the Bishop. His Lordship replied that he could not interfere in the financial question; and, as to the union with the hospital of Quebec, that he had for divers reasons been obliged to consent to it. He advised M^{de} d'Youville's appealing to the King, and held out to her the hope that His Majesty might reverse the Quebec ordinance, if put in possession of the real facts of the case.

At the same time, he blamed her for the expenses incurred by the repairs, and insisted on the sowing of the crops before resigning the farms to the Quebec community.

While this correspondence was going on, M^{de} d'Youville and her companions saw with grief their moveable goods—at least those which were worth the expense of transportation—packed up and despatched to Quebec.

God permitted that these kind servants of the poor should drink of the bitter cup of humiliation and disappointment to the very dregs. But the time approached when their patient perseverance in a holy cause and humble dependence on divine Providence were to be rewarded.

CHAPTER VI.

M^{de} d'Youville and her companions favored by the Court.—The King's Letters patent.—Constructions and improvements.—General good will manifested by the assistance she receives from all classes.

The Court of France had, for some time, remained silent. M. Bigot, failing to receive a confirmation of his ordinance, wrote to ask M^{de} d'Youville to remain in charge of the hospital till the King's reply should be received, adding: "I make this proposal in as much as the plan may be agreeable to you."

On the 2nd of July, 1751, a message was received by the Governor General and the Intendant, commanding that the sale of the hospital should be suspended, and pointing out that the government at Quebec had, in the ordinance of the 15th of October of the preceding year, gone beyond the King's wishes.

This favorable change was brought about by the intervention of M. Couturier, Superior General of St. Sulpice, in Paris. As Seigneur of

the island of Montreal, he judged it his duty to maintain the General Hospital. The Seminary in conceding land for the institution had stipulated that in the event of the hospital being closed, the grounds and buildings should revert to the Seminary or be bought by the successors of the Hospitallers. In point of fact, all had come back into the possession of the Seminary since 1747. In an interview with the King, whose confidence he enjoyed in a high degree, M. Couturier gave every assurance of the discharge of the debt due by the hospital.

A royal decree, dated May 15, 1752, annulled the Quebec ordinance of October 15, 1750, and ordered the Governor General and the Intendant to confer with M^{de} d'Youville about the hospital. Finally the King's Letters patent, dated from Versailles, June 3, 1753, enjoin :

“That M^{de} d'Youville and her companions shall replace the Hospitaller Brothers in the charge and direction of the General Hospital of Montreal, and in the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges which had been granted to the brotherhood by the King's Letters patent, dated April 15, 1694 :

“That the ladies administering to the hospital shall be twelve in number, amongst whom the different offices of the house shall, under the Bishop's authority, be distributed ; and that

new subjects shall be approved by him before their admission; that the administrators shall retain the right to their own property :

“ That they shall receive from the Bishop a rule of life; and in health and in sickness they shall be supported at the expense of the house.”

This latter clause was inserted at the request of M^{de} d'Youville, in opposition to the views of several persons in authority who proposed that the funds destined for the support of the ladies administering to the hospital, and those for the poor, should be kept separate. M^{de} d'Youville preferred there should be no such separation, which she feared might, in the future, cause a too great zeal for the increase of the community's means, to the detriment of the poor.

The General Hospital, thus secured to M^{de} d'Youville by a permanent title, was situated outside the walls of Montreal, on a promontory bounded on the south side by the St. Lawrence, and on the north by the brook St. Peter. Years before the Grey Nuns moved from this site, in 1871, to their present location—between St. Catherine and Dorchester Streets—the busiest and most commercial portion of the modern city had grown up around them, invading the stillness of the cloister with din of industry, the clang of the hammer and the

noise of machinery; while, on the river side, the forest of tall masts and smoking funnels of a great transatlantic fleet of merchant ships seemed to overshadow them.*

But at the time we speak of, the thirteen acres of land, or thereabouts, granted by the Seminary in 1688 and 1692 as a site for an hospital — although a church and a monastery had been erected thereon — were still unenclosed and exposed to all the inconveniences arising from proximate neighborhood to a town; for between the monastery and the southwes-

* Transatlantic travellers, arriving at Montreal, step from the Allan Line steamers upon ground, which, although outside the wall built higher up by M^de d'Youville, so as to avoid the danger of inundation, belonged to the site of the old General Hospital. The offices of Messrs. Allan Brothers stand, however, within what was M^de d'Youville's enclosure.

The following streets — McGill, d'Youville, Normant and St. Peter — intersect the land which was, in 1688 and 1692, granted by the gentlemen of the Seminary for the purpose of a General Hospital.

The old gate-way, demolished to make room for St. Peter Street — a continuation of the ancient street of the same name — stood close to St. Ann's market on its south side. The new St. Peter Street, in line, or nearly so, with the old, but much wider, passes over the ground on which stood the gate-way, as aforesaid; also the "*avant-cour*" front court, church and convent garden in its rear.

tern extremity of the ramparts, the distance was that of only a few minutes walk.

M^{de} d'Youville felt the full necessity of an enclosure, but was also painfully aware of her present state of destitution arising from the previous improvements. She hoped for assistance from the Marquis Duquesne, M. de La-jonquière's successor as Governor General, who manifested great esteem for the community and its foundress. She was not disappointed; the Governor espoused her cause and used his influence in her favor. Every one contributed; the workmen furnished the skilled labor; others aided in carting and the rougher work; and M^{de} d'Youville and her sisters carried stones and mortar. A wall 3,600 feet in length was begun in May, 1754, and finished within four years.

Amongst the generous contributors were the Governor General, Mgr. de Pontbriand and M. Normant.

M^{de} d'Youville then enlarged the hospital by building a new wing, and the church became the centre of the structure; to the church she added a sanctuary. Soon after, she was enabled to construct a bakery and other small outbuildings. The blessing of God on M^{de} d'Youville and her work was made daily more and more manifest.

CHAPTER VII.

The Bishop visits the General Hospital. — He establishes M^{de} d'Youville and her companions as a religious Community. — Their Rule. — Dress. — Assistant and Novice-Mistress.

While this good work was in progress, Mgr. de Pontbriand made his pastoral visit to the house, that by a solemn act of episcopal authority he might form M^{de} d'Youville and her associates into a religious community.

His Lordship ratified her position of superior; decreed there should be an assistant-superior; and ordained the establishment of a community room for the exclusive use of the sisters, and of a single confessor, except at the Ember days.

The rule M. Normant had given M^{de} d'Youville and her associates in 1745, in conformity to which they had lived ever since, received at the same time episcopal sanction.

It had been written on three sheets of paper: the first contained the engagements contracted in devoting themselves to the service of the poor; the second laid down the details of each day's occupations; and the third related to spiritual exercises and the virtues to be practised in the state of life which they had embraced.

As this rule had proved sufficient in the past, not only for the general guidance of the community, but also for the personal sanctification of its members; and as the Bishop judged that any development thereof, suitable to all the circumstances that might arise in the future, could only be prudently made when time and experience had demonstrated its desirability, he commanded that the rule, as it stood, should be literally observed; and, to this effect, placed his seal on the document containing it.

Some time previous M^{de} d'Youville, at the advice of M. Normant, had devised a costume to be adopted by the community which she now presented to the Bishop for his approval. This modest habit received his immediate sanction. It consisted of a gray camlet gown fastened by a cincture of black cloth; a black merino domino covered the head and shoulders; a simple cap of black gauze shaded the face, under which was a band of white muslin;

a ring and a cross of silver completed the ordinary costume. For church and out-door wear, a black cape and hood of light material were added, which were substituted by a cloak and bonnet of gray cloth for winter.

God had provided a novice-mistress. A young lady, seventeen years old, of good education, Theresa Lemoine-Despins, had, while M^{de} d'Youville and her companions occupied a small house within the walls of the town, come to live with them as a boarder. She had no wish to bind herself by vow, or even to assist in taking care of the poor, for whom she even felt a secret repugnance; she only desired to lead a retired and religious life, and to benefit by the edifying example she knew she would continually have before her eyes. Latterly, however, M^{lle} Despins had felt an attraction to join the community in which she had so long dwelt. She communicated her desire to M. Normant, but said she would not become a sister till a novice-mistress would be named. M. Normant promised her that the day she entered there should be one. When the day came, what was her surprise to find herself installed in this position! It was one she did not covet, — which she had only desired to see filled for her own spiritual guidance. Holy

obedience, however, left no choice but to accept the charge which had been allotted to her.

About the same time, Sister Mary Thaumur-Lasource, the first of M^{de} d'Youville's associates and who had given her very effectual aid in building up her work for the poor, was named assistant.

Sister Despins made an excellent novice-mistress. She retained this important office until 1771, when, at M^{de} d'Youville's death, she was unanimously elected to succeed her as superior.

The Bishop's visit was on June 15, 1755. The solemn taking of the habit was deferred till the feast of St. Louis—then of obligation in Canada—which occurs on the 25th of August. That day was also the feast of M. Normant's patron saint.

To this excellent priest, the Guardian Angel of the nascent community through so many trying years, and whom Mgr. de Pontbriand had recently appointed ecclesiastical superior, as well as in his capacity of Vicar General, it belonged to officiate on this touching occasion.

The ceremony took place in the community-room. The ritual employed was composed by M. Normant, and is the same still in use.

That morning, as the nuns walked from their convent to the parish church of Notre-



Imp. P. Dien, 32, r. Hauteville, Paris.

Millin sculp.

M^{me} D'Youville et ses filles reçoivent l'habit de leur institut; et se consacrent de nouveau à Jésus-Christ, pour le servir dans la personne des pauvres.

Dame, they met with a hearty welcome from the people who filled windows and crowded the streets to get a glimpse of these benefactors of the unfortunate.

A tender feeling of joy must have filled M^{de} d'Youville's loving heart on this all-auspicious day; but as a worthy writer tells us: "She rejoiced as the saints rejoice, by pouring out her soul in thanksgiving to God; by redoubling her fidelity in His service and by renewed zeal in the fulfilment of the duties to which He had called her." The same author, speaking of her gratitude to benefactors, continues: "Her pious disposition did not allow her to omit the least marks of delicate consideration towards them; so that we may truly say: if those persons had had no other object in assisting her than that of gaining a temporal reward, they would have been sufficiently repaid by such warm and unalterable gratitude."

Soon after the Bishop's visit to the General Hospital, in writing to M^{de} d'Youville, he addressed her as "*Supérieure des demoiselles de la Charité*" Superior of the Ladies of Charity, and remarked in his letter that: "He is sure the public will approve of this name." However, the generality of people thought differently, and, as if by acclamation, named these good ladies by the more affectionate epithet of

Sisters of Charity, or still more familiarly — because of their simple attire — “Grey Nuns.”

The King's Letters patent speak of M^{de} d'Youville and her companions as secular persons, in order that they might continue in the possession and enjoyment of their property, and limit the number of the associates to twelve. This latter clause the Court inserted in its own defence, as, under certain conditions, the King had promised each of these ladies a life pension of 250 francs yearly; but these stipulations only affected them in regard to civil obligations, for M^{de} d'Youville and her companions had already, in 1737, taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Mgr. de Pontbriand, in forming them into a religious community of nuns, solemnly ratified these conditions.

Each associate at her profession gave up her property to the poor, by signing an act empowering the superior to deal with it, for this purpose, as she judged best. No account was to be rendered to the sister, who thus absolutely renounced all her worldly goods.

It was foreseen that the limited number of twelve associates would not always suffice. The Bishop provided that the number should increase as circumstances and the development of the community rendered it advisable.

CHAPTER VIII.

M^{de} d'Youville's appearance and character.

It may not be inappropriate to briefly portray M^{de} d'Youville as she appeared at this epoch.

In stature, M^{de} d'Youville was above the ordinary height; her features were comely and of perfect cast; her complexion was deep, rich and finely colored, her glance keen and full of expression, and she passed for one of the most striking women of her day; while her grave, modest and refined demeanor lent her a dignity that commanded deference. To these exterior advantages were united the rarest qualities of heart and mind. The Abbé de l'Isle-Dieu commented on her uncommon gifts in a letter to Mgr. de Pontbriand. Her judgment was extremely practical; she easily gave way to sound reasoning. She was prone to reflection rather than to speech. Her tender, generous heart overflowed with sympathy for the

sorrows of others, but her virile mind kept this warmth of nature free from weakness and allowed her to be stern and severe when circumstances required it. It was a matter of surprise to find her inspire at once both love and fear. Her piety sought out the practice of perfect devotion, yet avoided affectation and austerity.

God designed her to be in the church of the young colony, a mother to the afflicted and the abandoned. She was the strong woman of the Bible who opens her hands to the needy and stretches out her arms to the poor. Her trials had strengthened her spirit and she brought to her work a power of will and a zeal and devotion that heroic souls alone are capable of experiencing.

This woman, fitted by nature and education to shine in society, devoted herself unflinchingly to the service of the poor, and so assiduously that her labors were often protracted far into the night.

One day as she was busied, in very humble attire, making candles, the Intendant came to pay a visit to the convent. A sister, seeing this high official approach, hastened to warn M^de d'Youville, so that she might have time to change her toilet. She judged, however, it was better to see the Intendant at once rather than

keep him waiting; so she appeared just as she was, gracefully excusing herself by saying that had *Monsieur l'Intendant* given notice of his visit, she would have taken care to be better prepared; nevertheless, she could receive his commands just as well in her working dress as if more carefully attired.

“It was our greatest happiness” said the sisters who had lived with M^{de} d'Youville, as quoted by M. Satin, “to surround M^{de} d'Youville and listen to her words.” On one occasion as they gathered about her, she pointed to Sister Coutlée and said in a tone of conviction that drew the attention of all present: “Sister Coutlée will remain the last — she will survive you all.” This prediction was literally accomplished, as she outlived all the sisters then in the community.*

“But we should not think,” continues M. Satin, “that the charm of M^{de} d'Youville's conversation or the expansive affection she exhibited towards the sisters diminished, in the least, her attention to their spiritual advancement or interfered with her solicitude in maintaining order and regularity in the community.”

* Sister Coutlée was third superior, succeeding Mother Lemoine-Despins in 1792; she lived till 1821.

CHAPTER IX.

M^{de} d'Youville's devotion to the poor.—Her divers works of charity.—She succors English soldiers.—Different means adopted to increase their income.

When M^{de} d'Youville took charge of the General Hospital she declined to continue the little school, — one of the works of the Hospitaller Brothers, — so that she and her associates might be more free to devote all their energies to the care of the poor. “I was hungry and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me. Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.” *St. Matthew*, xxv. 35, 36, 40.

These words of our divine Lord had sunk deep into her heart; and by her lively faith in His guidance she was ever ready, with a zeal which seemed to set the rules of mere human

prudence at defiance, to accept for the unfortunate every work that presented itself.

Besides the poor received on her first assuming charge of the hospital, or soon afterwards, comprising men, women, children, insane and penitents, she considered it a part of her sublime mission to welcome those who suffered from any sickness, the nature of which prevented them entering the H^Ôtel-Dieu, such as epileptics, lepers, those afflicted with cancer and the like. When, in 1755, small-pox broke out, committing terrible ravages among the Indians and spreading to Montreal and the Hotel-Dieu was unable to accept all who sought admission, she offered to receive women suffering from this disease.

On hearing this, Mgr. de Pontbriand wrote to her on the 22nd of September: "In a time of sickness it is well to aid in good works which may not be strictly within one's own sphere of action; I am, therefore, glad to express my approval of your having received the poor women suffering from small-pox."

About this time also, the number of wounded soldiers had so increased that, to accomodate them, the nuns of the H^Ôtel-Dieu were constrained to give up their dormitory and, finally, even their church, after removing the Blessed Sacrament. At M. Bigot's request, in 1756, M^{de}

d'Youville fitted up a large room for the reception of the English prisoners. This room was called *Salle des Anglais*, Englishmen's ward, and was devoted to this purpose up to, and for some time after, the conquest.

These prisoners were lodged at the King's expense, but the full amount of His Majesty's munificence never reached the convent. M. Bigot profited of the depreciation of the currency to make a fortune not only out of M^{de} d'Youville and her sisters, but, also, by his dishonest manipulation of moneys sent from France to subsidize the Indians. A considerable loss thus accrued to the hospital. Provisions, owing to the depreciated currency, rose to fabulous prices. However, in spite of these and other difficulties, the sisters continued their work of charity with unabated zeal.

When the hospital was confided to them the revenues consisted of about 450 *minots* * and a fixed rent from France of 800 livres; but this sum had, for twenty years, been under seizure to pay the debt of the Hospitaller Brothers; while, in 1740, there were poor enough in the house to consume 1,800 *minots* of wheat yearly.

She succeeded, during the first few years of her administration, in raising the receipts to 20,000 livres. Still, the expenditure exceeded

* A *minot* contains a little more than a bushel.

this sum by a third, and other means had to be devised to bring the income nearer the expenditure.

One means was to invite ladies to reside in the house as boarders. The high esteem in which M^{de} d'Youville was now held, her ingratiating manners and the delicacy with which she exercised the charity that reigned supreme in her character quickly drew many ladies to her convent, where the absence of worldly cares, a goodly circle of friends and the consolations of religion awaited them. Among them were M^{lle} Lanoue, M^{de} de Beaujeu, M^{de} de Lacorne, M^{de} de Lotbinière-Laronde, M^{de} de Lignery, M^{de} de Verchères, M^{de} Sermonville, the Baroness of Longueuil, M^{lle} de Repentigny; also, some of M^{de} d'Youville's relatives: M^{lle} de Bleury, M^{de} de Vincennes, her mother M^{de} Silvain, and her sisters Mary Louise and Mary Clemence de Lajemmerais. Several of these remained in the convent until their death.

M^{de} d'Youville, after expressing the sorrow of assisting at the death-bed of the last named of her sisters, writes: "My sister, M^{de} Maugras, was for fifteen days almost continually in agony, without losing speech or consciousness; my consolation is, that her death was that of the predestined."

M^{de} d'Youville received also several English

ladies, for her charity made no exception of persons or of nationality. The ladies assisted her not only by the payments they made, but also by working for the poor. She writes, "We have here, as a boarder, the widow of M. de Phaneuf, an old lady of over eighty years, who fasts and abstains on all the days of precept and works for the support of the poor as if she were one of the sisters."

M^{de} d'Youville and her associates took up every branch of needle-work and their earnings were the principal source of revenue to the convent. She never refused any sort of labor, however disagreeable; so that it became a saying when any thing difficult had to be done: "Take it to the Grey Nuns." They supplied clothes, tents, etc., etc., to the troops, realizing, previous to the conquest, from this source alone, between 20,000 and 30,000 livres a year. The King's store keeper, noting that it was profitable to employ the sisters, sent also large orders to the convent. This, with what was supplied to private parties, brought in from 15,000 to 20,000 annually,—and once even as much as 30,000 livres; and the alms she received amounted in one year to 27,000 livres.

She worked, too, for the merchants, making clothes for the Indians and ornaments for their chiefs which could be exchanged for furs. The

merchants ordinarily furnished the material out of which dresses were made and ornamented. The halls set apart for the exercises of the community were sometimes filled with pieces of cloth, printed calico, calamanco, etc.

When the merchants were obliged to leave for the West and the sisters were hard-pressed, every one in the house who could assist willingly lent a helping hand, and their labors were often prolonged far into the night.

They also worked for the churches. M. Poucin, a priest of the Seminary, taught the sisters to make altar-breads and wax candles, and these industries still exist in the hospital.

M^{de} d'Youville's spirit of enterprise induced her to continue projects undertaken by the Hospitallers, and under her management they realized a substantial income for the convent. She bought tobacco in the leaf and prepared it for the market; she sold lime, building stone, sand, barrel hoops and similar articles. Nothing was neglected that might turn to the profit of her poor. She had cattle grazing in her fields; an ice-house, a yard and outbuildings were let by her; a boat belonging to the community served as a ferry and brought in many a penny.

Though M^{de} d'Youville was prudent and economical, nothing was more foreign to her

generous heart than sordid methods. She held it a cheerful duty to pay each one his due, and to render the employees more contented and to attach them to the community, she was wont, at certain times, to make them handsome presents.

It is not usual for social economists to seek within cloister walls the solution of modern labor problems; but we are of a mind that those who strive towards Christian perfection and who put into practice the counsels of the Divine Master, are not the least apt to teach the world how to attain that peace and goodwill which He came to establish among men and which are the fruit of His spirit.

CHAPTER X.

M^{de} d'Youville's kindness to English soldiers.

In 1757, M^{de} d'Youville learned that an English soldier named John had been captured by the Indian allies of France, and fearing that, according to the cruel custom of these savages, he might be burned alive, succeeded in ransoming him for two hundred livres.

John was full of gratitude and became a very faithful servant in the hospital, acting as infirmarian to the sick and wounded English. His patronymic, (which the archives of the convent—sufficiently explicit in most other respects—do not give us,) sounding strange to French ears, he was dubbed *Jean l'Anglais*, (John the Englishman,) and so it was with other prisoners, each had *l'Anglais* added to his Christian name.

Some of these soldiers afterwards became settlers, and this is said to account for the con-

siderable number of Canadians, who in our own day, rejoice in the name of *Langlois*.

The following year, M^{de} d'Youville received a little Irish girl only a few months old, named O'Flaherty, whom one of the priests of the Seminary, M. de Lavalinière, had rescued with her mother from the Indians. When discovered they were already bound to a post and the Indians had prepared to fire the pile. The good priest succeeded by prayers, entreaties and promises in saving their lives and in having them given over to his care. The little girl was educated in the convent, became a Grey Nun, and lived till 1824.

Several of the English soldiers who had recovered from their wounds entered the service of the community. At one time there were five in the hospital and twenty-two working on the farms at Point St. Charles and Chambly.

At this epoch skirmishes were frequent between bands of French and English soldiers, each accompanied by their Indian allies.

Sometimes parties of Englishmen, pursued by the French and the hostile Indians, — these latter desirous above all things of taking their enemies alive in order to torture them, — found themselves hemmed in by the walls of the town on the one side, and the St. Lawrence on the other. Their only salvation, then, was to

take refuge within the convent. Its doors were never known to have been closed against them; they invariably met with a friendly reception from the nuns, whose mission was charity to all men, not taking into account differences of nationality. It was not enough to admit them — that would have been of little use — it was more necessary to conceal them. As the house was likely to be searched by the enemy in pursuit, M^{de} d'Youville had the poor fugitives hidden in the vaults of the church. There the sisters supplied them with all they required and attended to their wants till a favorable moment could be found to secure their escape. To avoid the danger of these poor soldiers being recognized as they passed through the hospital or its grounds, the stratagem was resorted to of carefully wrapping them in the hoods and long gray cloaks which the sisters wear out-doors in cold weather. The disguise proved a complete success. One day, however, as they were thus conducting several English soldiers to their place of concealment in the vaults, an Indian ally of the French, — a small-pox patient in the ward through which they were passing, — although nearly blind from the violence of the disease, discovered, it is said by the acuteness of his sense of smell, that they were not nuns, as their appearance would

indicate, but English soldiers. Filled with fury, the Indian warrior, in spite of his weak condition, sought desperately to rise from bed and throw himself upon his enemies, — and, indeed, had he not been held down by the sisters, he might have succeeded in doing it.

On another occasion, a young English soldier pursued by an Indian took refuge within the walls of the convent. The Indian continuing to follow him, he ran up a stair which led to the community room where M^{de} d'Youville was working at a tent. She sees the young Englishman enter and suspects at once from the agitation depicted on his face that he is fleeing for his life. In a flash she lifts the immense tent in her arms, motions the soldier to throw himself on the floor and hastily spreads it over him. Hardly has she done so, when an Indian frenzied with rage and tomahawk in hand rushes into the room. M^{de} d'Youville with admirable presence of mind silently points to an open door leading in an opposite direction. Thinking the fugitive had escaped by that way, he darts through the door, down the stairs, along the passage and rushes wildly on till he is outside the convent. The young Englishman's life was saved. We shall see in another chapter how effectively he proved his gratitude to M^{de} d'Youville and the convent.

CHAPTER XI.

Famine caused by the war.—Barrels of flour found in the convent refectory.—The English invest Montreal.—The hospital saved at the prayer of the soldier who had been succored by M^{de} d'Youville.—Death of His Lordship Mgr. de Pontbriand and of M. Normant.

The war with England which had raged since 1754 and obliged nearly all able-bodied Canadians to become soldiers, brought about, a few years later, so serious a famine that, at one time, the price of wheat in Montreal rose to forty francs of paper money, or twenty-four francs in specie, per *minot*.

In order that the poor might not suffer, the sisters allowed themselves wheaten bread only at one meal a day. In this trying state of affairs, all eyes were turned to the Reverend Mother.*

She lost nothing of her usual confidence; she exhibited unflinching courage and knew how to

* Life of M^{de} d'Youville, by M. Satin.

infuse it into the hearts of her companions. One day that they had no bread and no means of purchasing any, the nuns, on entering the refectory, found, to their unspeakable surprise, several barrels of fine wheaten flour. To quote the words of a reliable writer:* “As they did not know, or even suspect, whence this assistance could come by any natural means, they looked upon it, and very justly, as a miraculous intervention of divine Providence.” This is the evidence rendered after M^de d’Youville’s death by several of the eldest and most prudent of her companions who had been eye-witnesses of the event: Sister Despins, who succeeded M^de d’Youville as superior, Sister Thaumur-Lasource, assistant, and Sister Rainville. Indeed, when we consider the peculiar circumstances—the number of people always moving about a crowded hospital, etc.,—it was morally impossible that any one could carry barrels of flour to such a house, bring them into the interior of the building, and above all, into the refectory of the community, unperceived, or at least without its being afterwards discoverable who was the author of this bounty. However, neither the nuns nor the other inmates of the hospital, nor the priests of the Seminary, (who might more than any one else be suspect-

* Life of M^de d’Youville, Villemarie, 1852.



Imp. P. Dore, Rue de Valenciennes, Paris.

Milbr sculp

Toujours à la veille de manquer de tout, et nous ne manquons jamais, du moins du nécessaire, j'admire chaque jour la divine Providence. Le Père éternel fait l'objet de ma grande confiance depuis près de quarante ans.

ed of this act of charity) ever knew how it was accomplished. M. Satin, one of the latter, speaking of this event in his *Life of M^{de} d'Youville*, written sixty years afterwards, treats of the event as miraculous.

We are now approaching the conquest of Canada by the English. Quebec, as every one knows, was taken in the autumn of 1759, and Montreal capitulated about a year later. The day before this latter event took place, three English armies met outside the walls. General Amherst, commander-in-chief, who had approached from the west and had pitched his tent on a rising ground * commanding the town, observed the substantial wall of the General Hospital, and mistaking it for a military rampart commanded his artillery to place themselves in position for its immediate destruction. During this action a young soldier rushed from the ranks and boldly approached the General, imploring him not to fire on the supposed

* On this rising ground a wall fencing off the grounds of the Grand Seminary from Sherbrooke-street contains a marble slab with the following inscription:

“ This Tablet is erected to commemorate the encampment, near this site, of the British army under Major-General Sir Jeffrey Amherst, and the closing event of the conquest of Cape Breton and Canada, by the surrender of Montreal, and with it, ‘ La Nouvelle France.’ ”

September 8, 1760.

stronghold, which, he said, was a religious house where he and his comrades had not only been sheltered, but treated with the greatest kindness. General Amherst ordered five or six of his officers, of whom several could speak French, to proceed at once to the supposed intrenchment and ascertain the truth or falsehood of the soldier's tale.

M^{de} d'Youville welcomed these gentlemen with her usual courtesy, conducted them through the hospital, and even into the community room where refreshments were prepared for their reception. The officers, after partaking of the hospitality offered them, went away, as a Canadian writer tells us, "filled with respect for M^{de} d'Youville and her community."

The following day, September 8, 1760, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, seeing Montreal surrounded by a formidable army and having no adequate means of resistance, in order to avoid needless bloodshed and destruction of property, wisely agreed to a capitulation, by which Canada passed from the rule of the French King to that of the English Monarch.

The venerable bishop, Mgr. de Pontbriand, did not live to behold the consummation of events which might have seemed to presage the total ruin of his diocese and adopted country.

The year previous, he had been driven by the rough logic of the cannon ball from his palace at Quebec, and had seen his cathedral reduced to ashes by the bombs of an invading army. After these calamities, His Lordship sought a retreat in the residence of the Sulpicians adjoining the parish church of Montreal, where, far from his native land and weighed down by sorrow and anxiety, yet surrounded by the consolations of religion and those that the warmest and most respectful friendship could bestow, he breathed out his soul to God on the 8th of June, 1760.

A few months previous to the fall of Quebec, the sisters lost their venerable founder. Since 1753, M. Normant, owing to bodily infirmities, had been unable to direct the community, and the late Bishop had named M. Montgolfier to fulfil this duty. M. Normant's death took place on the 18th of June, 1759. His remains were interred under the choir of the parish church. The sisters, as a mark of filial affection, gave to his obsequies a pomp hitherto unknown in Canada. His remembrance is still kept alive in the community by the observance of his patronal feast which occurs on August 25th, and by one of the sisters always bearing his revered name.

CHAPTER XII.

The conquest of Canada by the English which at first appears disastrous proves eventually beneficial.

The conquest of the country by the English seemed a terrible disaster to the good Canadian people. For those who remained in Canada, it was a severe blow to see many of the best and noblest families and individuals determine, at no matter what sacrifice, to leave the land of their adoption rather than submit to foreign rule — rather than exchange their allegiance from the Bourbons to the Guelphs. They naturally feared that the English Government would abolish the French language and laws, and might even burden the Catholics with such disabilities as would eventually extinguish the faith. The loss of so many relatives and friends added to the bitterness of these painful forebodings.

M^{de} d'Youville, at this time, writes to a friend: "It is a great affliction for us to see this unhappy country becoming more and more abandoned. All the good citizens are departing. On every side there are farewells to relatives, friends and benefactors, with no hope of ever seeing them again. Nothing can be sadder. Each day brings new sacrifices."

She writes of another on the eve of her leaving Canada: "We lose her for ever. It is several days since I went to see her or her family. I shall not call till I know she has embarked, for I feel unable to say adieu. When she is gone, I will do my best to console her father and mother, her brothers and sisters; but I fear her departure will be a terrible grief to the family. I must stop,—my tears blind me."

She writes to one of the benefactors of the hospital: "As I have not the courage, on the eve of your departure, to call and wish you farewell and thank you, allow me to express in writing not only my own gratitude but that of our community towards you. We can never forget your kindness and charity; nor shall we omit to offer our humble prayers to God for your safety. I trust you will write to us and give us the address of your new abode."

To one of her nieces she writes: "Let us

not speak of the sadness of parting, but rather let us labor to meet in paradise where our union will be forever. All our sisters send you thousands of good wishes, Sister Despins, especially, has just come in her large-hearted way to beg I may not forget to send you hers. The ladies, also, wish to be kindly remembered."

To the Abbé de l'Isle Dieu she writes: "Pray to God for me that I may have the strength to bear all these crosses with resignation and to turn them to the best account. They are, indeed, many — the loss of our King, our country, our goods, and worse than all, the danger to which our holy religion is now exposed."

It was not strange that a change of rule, which under God's providence, proved eventually so beneficial to Canada, should have been unwelcome to the colonists, or that they should have so much dreaded becoming subjects of Great Britain. They had before their eyes the sufferings of the Irish people. They could not forget — the event was then comparatively recent — how the treaty of Limerick, for which the honor of the British Crown had been pledged, was shamefully broken; how King William's royal promise to protect Irish Catholics in the liberties they had enjoyed under the Stuarts had been violated; how, in

spite of solemn treaty, the Irish had been driven from their own parliament, and in their absence, the penal code and other unjust statutes passed by which their property was, in some cases, confiscated, in others, rendered totally insecure; how industry had been annihilated, religion proscribed, the education of their children prohibited. These were facts which, at the time of the conquest, could not be easily overlooked, and which had been made obvious by the number of Irish Catholics who continually sought refuge in France from the persecution they were subjected to in their native land.

The English, however, did not treat Canada as they had treated Ireland. On the contrary, justice and fairness marked the policy of the British Government toward the conquered colony.

When once convinced of the sincerity of England's conduct, the Canadians accepted the situation and pledged fealty to the English throne. "Fear God and honor the King" was the olden maxim of these devoted children of the Church, and events were soon to prove them faithful to it. In 1775, the American colonies revolted against the Mother Country, and spent every temptation and inducement to incite the Canadians to join them. The

great Benjamin Franklin discovered, after long months of intrigue, that his most subtle endeavors to bribe or charm were impotent against the influence and authority that the Canadian clergy brought to bear on the population. Allegiance to England was maintained unshaken. Where blandishments failed, force was resorted to and the conquest of Canada determined upon by the very men whose motto was Freedom and Liberty. History tells us how the Canadian people followed the advice of their clergy and stood firm in their allegiance; how they enlisted in the army and navy of England and assisted in repelling the invaders.

When the fleur-de-lisé standards ceased to float from the turrets and towers of Canada, when the flag of Old England met the gaze of the French colonists, many a heart was touched with fear for the faith that was dearer to them than even France and the French tongue. But the ways of God are wonderful. What seemed to human foresight to be the omen of danger, perhaps of persecution, proved to be deliverance and salvation. A dire epoch befell France. The Reign of Terror stalked from one end of the land to the other; torch and sword did sinister work; religion and social order lay under a dark and bloody shroud. Horrors suc-

ceeded upon horrors,—all was abomination and desolation.

Had the Canadians not been cut off from France, they would not have escaped a share of the pitiful misfortunes that convulsed the mother country. As it was, they enjoyed tranquillity and prosperity. It does not enter into the scope of our biography to discuss the conciliatory measures adopted by the English in their treatment of Canada; we prefer citing the following extract from the sermon pronounced at the funeral of Mgr. Briand, in 1794, expressing the sentiments of the Canadian people at this time: “It seemed vain to expect that our conquerors who were strangers to our country, our language, our laws, our customs and our faith, could give to Canada what it lost by changing allegiance. Generous nation! thou hast taught us beyond possibility of doubt that our fears were groundless. Industrious nation! thou hast made our land teem with the riches locked up in its bosom. Benevolent nation! thou givest daily new proof of kindness to our Canada. No, no, ye are not the enemies of those whom your laws protect, nor of our faith which you have respected! We ask you to forget our early mistrust: our people had not yet learned to know you.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Poverty of the colony after the conquest. — M^{de} d'Youville undertakes the care of foundlings. — A miraculous incident.

“ From a spiritual point of view,” M^{de} d'Youville tells us in one of her letters, “ the conquest has not been detrimental to Canada, as the British Government wisely avoids any direct interference with religion; but in things temporal there is much suffering. The English neither hurt us nor help us. It is hard to find a living. Money is extremely scarce and we cannot earn anything.... There is now no work to be done and the poor are more numerous than ever. We wish to help them but have not the means. I trust divine Providence may come to our aid.”

A war of six or seven years duration had impoverished Canada; a great many of the

wealthy class left the Colony; and the assistance formerly granted by the French King was at an end. Thus, the revenues of the convent, which before the conquest had been sixty thousand livres, had fallen to nine thousand.

The other religious communities also suffered to such an extent that the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu had resolved to leave Canada. The sisters at Laval were ready to receive them, and a rich merchant, M. Hery, had offered to pay the expenses of removal to France. M. Montgolfier, as Vicar-General, superior of the Seminary and of the different communities of nuns at Montreal, and as Seigneur, did not wish to lose a body of religious so useful to the colony, and explained to them the good they might do by remaining. His advice decided them not to abandon the post to which God seemed to have called them. In these unhappy straits, M^{de} d'Youville's spirit of zeal and charity appeared rather to increase than to diminish. What at present distressed her more than all else, was the total absence of that care formerly bestowed on foundlings or abandoned children.

Up to a comparatively recent date, the Seigniors, as head functionaries having the right to administer justice in their respective Seigniories, were obliged to provide for the support of foundlings; but since 1694, when jurisdiction

over the Island of Montreal had been assumed by the French Crown, the latter had made provision for these unfortunates. After the conquest, however, the English King did not feel inclined to accept this charge, especially as the social demoralization and extreme misery into which a portion of the population had sunk during the war, had much increased the number of abandoned children. M^{de} d'Youville's compassionate heart was rent at the thought that these little helpless ones should be neglected, and she had long felt an earnest desire to become their protectress. One winter day as she crossed over the brook which flowed past the walls of the convent, she perceived to her horror the body of a frozen infant lying on the snow, — the knife with which it had been murdered still sticking in the throat, and its little hands raised as if imploring Heaven's vengeance on so terrible a crime.

Moved by this touching spectacle, M^{de} d'Youville felt that it was cruelty on her part not to succor these helpless and abandoned babes.

When it became evident that the English Government would not burden itself with this task, M^{de} d'Youville consulted M. Montgolfier and her companions, and though beset by countless difficulties, she determined to undertake this crowning work of charity.



Imp. P. Elou, Je. r. Hautboisville, Paris.

M. J. H. sculp.

M^{me} D'Youville, consternée et le cœur navré de douleur, à la vue du corps d'un petit enfant pognardé, et gisant dans la glace, prend la résolution d'adopter et d'élever gratuitement tous les enfants abandonnés qu'en lui présentera.

At the very commencement of the work M^{de} d'Youville received a small subsidy. M. Montgolfier applied (September, 1760,) to General Gage, then Governor of Montreal, for his approval and assistance in carrying out this work. That official not only readily accorded the former, but even granted the convent all fines exacted for any infraction of the laws. These courts were merely courts-martial, and were soon afterwards superseded by civil tribunals. Under the latter, the fines were no longer allotted to the convent, nor was any other provision made by which public aid might be given to this important work. Thus, the Grey Nuns are, it is said, the first persons in America, to undertake without any remuneration, this onerous, and humanly speaking, ungrateful ministration.

Two months before her death, M^{de} d'Youville wrote to the Governor General, Sir Guy Carleton, then in England: "Fearing to be unable, from want of resources, to continue this good work (care of the foundlings), I beg you will do me the honor of using your influence in its behalf, with His Majesty, to obtain a grant for the support of those little unfortunates. You can easily imagine, Sir, what cruelties may be committed by persons wishing to bury their shame with their children. I am sure this

consideration alone must make a deep impression on a heart so full of pity and so charitable as yours.* I hope you will not refuse me this favor."

The English Government declined, however, to grant any assistance.

A French writer remarks: "God, without doubt, permitted that it should be so, in order that it might be impossible to attribute to human agency the continuance of a work of which He willed Himself to be the sole support. It is certain, at least, that if M^{de} d'Youville undertook the charge, if, over and above the other works in which she was engaged, she never once refused a foundling...and educated them till they were old enough to earn their living, it was because of her confidence in that ever merciful Father, Who, she believed, had inspired her to undertake this work, and Who she believed would not allow it to perish." †

The following incident will show how well founded was her confidence :

One of the nurses to whom a dollar of her wages was yet due, applied for payment to M^{de} d'Youville, at the time in the company of one

* Sir Guy Carleton was highly esteemed by the Canadians.

† Life of M^{de} d'Youville, Villemarie, 1852, page 192.

of the sisters. M^{de} d'Youville knew she had only that one dollar remaining, yet thought she was bound in justice to pay what was due the nurse. Putting her hand into her pocket to pull out the required sum, what was not her surprise to find several other dollars besides, which she felt convinced no human hand had placed there. A deep sentiment of gratitude followed the first feeling of astonishment, and a renewed confidence in God's overruling providence.

M^{de} d'Youville, past all doubt, met with extraordinary difficulties in carrying out so many charitable works, and though a large sum of money due to her in France yet remained unpaid,* and though, as we shall see in the following chapter, fire reduced the General Hospital to a heap of ashes, she never once refused to take an unfortunate little waif. Before the end of 1762, she had already received thirty-five; and up to the present time, the Grey Nuns have succored considerably over thirty thousand foundlings.†

* Life of M^{de} d'Youville, Villemarie, 1852, page 197 and following.

† Up to April 13, 1895, the number of foundlings received in the Grey Nunnery of Montreal amounted to 30, 248.

CHAPTER XIV.

The General Hospital destroyed by fire.— What furniture was saved from the destructive element carried off by robbers.— The community and poor say the Te Deum. M^{de} d'Youville's prediction that the General Hospital will not be again destroyed by fire.

In the last chapter we alluded to the fire which on May 18, 1765, after burning a considerable portion of the town, reached the General Hospital and reduced it, its church and surrounding buildings to ashes.

It was about two o'clock of the afternoon when the fire broke out in a building on the corner of St. Francis-Xavier and St. Sacrament Streets. The wind was high and the neighboring houses were soon in a blaze.— The fire spread along St. Paul Street till it reached St. Peter Street which, as our readers are aware, led to the gate-way of the Hospital. When the first alarm reached the convent, M^{de} d'Youville, in her anxiety to render what

assistance she could despatched the sisters and all who could be mustered to help extinguish the flames, or at least to aid in saving the goods and belongings of the victims. In giving an account of what had occurred, she wrote: "The fire broke out about ten arpents (upwards of a quarter of a mile) from the convent, and we were fully two arpents (about four hundred feet) from the nearest houses of the town. Besides, I felt sure God would preserve an hospital, the home of the poor. Thus, seeing no need to take any extraordinary precautions, I sent to the scene of danger all who I thought could render any assistance, — both men and women."

While, in obedience to M^{de} d'Youville's wishes, these willing helpers were wholly taken up in this work of charity, the flames mad continual headway. Suddenly, what was then horror when a shout went up from the crowd that the General Hospital was in danger. By this time probably a hundred houses were ablaze. The breeze, quickened by the intense heat, had become a gale, and carried the sparks far to leeward, where they fell on the dry cedar shingles of the convent and church. The sisters hurried back to the hospital, but reached it only in time to see the roof one sheet of fire. It was too late to make any effort to extin-

guish the flames, so they set to work to carry out all that could be saved from the conflagration. Several persons came with carts, under pretence of assisting them; this was a mere artifice — they were robbers who made off with forty loads of linen, beds and other furniture that were never recovered. The other chattels were carried from the burning house by the sisters and the poor; but the spot selected in the hurry and excitement of the moment to deposit them being the lee-side and too near the hospital, they were in great part destroyed in spite of all the attempts made to save them.

In referring to this afterwards, M^{de} d'Youville writes: "The greater part of what we had was placed on the lee-side and there consumed. A large bale of good clothing and more than twenty chests were burned not far from the door."

To M^{de} d'Youville's great joy, however, among the objects saved were the picture of the ETERNAL FATHER, which had been brought from France at the time of M. Normant's illness, and the little brass statue of Our Lady, of which we have already made mention in speaking of M^{de} d'Youville's early work for the poor. It was M. de Féligonde, chaplain of the community, aided by one of the sisters, who

succeeded in rescuing the picture so dear to M^{de} d'Youville.

A nun who acted as sacristan was told by M^{de} d'Youville to carry the church linen to a certain place, but carried it to another where it was burned. The poor sister was inconsolable over the loss, attributing it chiefly to her own disobedience, for, had she removed it to the place indicated, it would have been saved.

M^{de} d'Youville says in one of her letters: "It blew a gale, so that in less than two hours upwards of a hundred houses in the town were destroyed.....In an extremely short time, our convent as well as all the buildings on Pointe à Callières * and those behind our

* This point or piece of land, jutting out into the river is of a triangular form, the apex being to the east or down stream, the base towards the site of the old General Hospital; the St. Lawrence bounding it on the south and the brook St. Peter on the north, forming each a side of the triangle.

It was here Champlain landed in 1611 and gave it the name of Place Royale, and here M. de Maisonneuve built a fort in 1642, sufficiently spacious to shelter himself and the whole of his little colony. They lived there, in perfect harmony, for eleven years.

This is also the spot on which the Holy Sacrifice was first celebrated by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

The fort being demolished some years afterwards, M. de Callières, named Governor of Montreal in 1684, chose it as the site of his residence.

On the same point of land stood the large square stone building once a Custom-House, and, more to the south-

garden were destroyed; so that on all the immense piece of land there remained only our mill and granary. Had it been anticipated that the fire would spread so far, we could have saved the greater portion of our belongings; but the distance was so great that we thought ourselves in safety. We have lost our furniture, clothing, linen and beds. I feel sure we have not saved the twelfth part of what we had. What escaped belongs principally to the church. God has so permitted it—may His holy name be praised.”

Indeed, the building and its furniture were quite secondary objects. The moment there had been an appearance of danger, M^{de} d'Youville's attention was completely occupied in having the infirm poor and the little foundlings carried to a place of safety within the enclosure. M^{de} d'Youville seeing all these poor people, of whom she was the guardian, and herself and the nuns suddenly deprived of a shelter, must have felt deeply anxious about the future; but she had learned to put entire confidence in God, and repeated the words of holy Job: “The

west, the fine modern edifice, with its tower, now used for that purpose. The open space in front of the former, has of late received the old name, Place Royale instead of that of Custom-House Square by which it was known for so many years.



Temp. P. Bon, Sc. v. Housfouille, Paris.

Milna sculp

*Mes enfants, nous allons réciter le Te deum à genoux, pour
remercier DIEU de la grâce qu'il vient de nous envoyer.*

Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord." * She then invited the homeless ones to join her in saying the TE DEUM on their knees in thanksgiving for this new visitation. On hearing this request, one of the sisters carried away by a natural movement cried out: "*Oui, je t'en dirai des Te Deums!*" Yes, I'll say Te Deums for you, indeed! Then immediately recollecting herself, she fell on her knees, and joined her good mother, her sisters and the poor in praising God. Nature had struggled for a moment, but grace triumphed.

At the end of the prayer, M^{de} d'Youville rose from her knees and pronounced these remarkable words: "My children, take courage; our house will never again be destroyed by fire."

This prediction has, up to the present time, been wonderfully fulfilled.

* Job, ch. v. 24.

CHAPTER XV.

The Grey Nuns and their poor kindly received at the Hôtel-Dieu. — The General Hospital rebuilt. — Liberal aid given by the Seminary and others. — The citizens of London subscribe. — Striking examples of God's providence.

The afternoon was now well advanced, and M^{de} d'Youville had yet to find shelter for over a hundred houseless people,* some of them very infirm.

After consulting the sisters it was decided to occupy the house and other buildings at Point St. Charles. They were about to carry out this resolution when their kind superior, M. Montgolfier, appeared on the scene. That good Father had arranged with the Daughters of St. Joseph for their reception at the Hôtel-Dieu, and M. de Féligonde, their chaplain, was to accompany them.

* The community numbered at this time 119 persons.

As this long and motley procession passed through the streets it met with the utmost compassion from the people. Some were even seen to weep at the sight of so much misery.

When this homeless flock reached the Hôtel-Dieu, then situated on St. Paul Street, they were received — we need hardly say — with affectionate sympathy by the Daughters of St. Joseph. M^{de} d'Youville and her companions were lodged in the infirmary, and the poor in the Salle Royale.

The night that followed such a day of fatigue and excitement was far from being a peaceful one. Upwards of fifty barrels of gun powder are said to have exploded in the town, and, unfortunately, several persons were killed and others wounded. M^{de} d'Youville writes: “On hearing these explosions we thought our last hour had come. Indeed, I look on it as providential that the whole town was not destroyed.”

The night filled with so many alarms wore at last to morning, and the nuns rose early that they might have the consolation of receiving their dear Lord in the Holy Sacrament of the altar.

Although the Sisters of St. Joseph were themselves much crippled in means, they provided for their unexpected guests at their own

expense till the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame and the Seminary of St. Sulpice could organize assistance. The community was divided into several groups: the sisters and a number of the poor—all the women and some men—remained in the Hôtel-Dieu; the other old and infirm men were lodged some in the house at Point St. Charles and some in the granary. Of those who occupied the Hôtel-Dieu, M. Satin in his Life of M^{de} d'Youville says: "They remained in the Hôtel-Dieu for the space of about seven months. They had what was barely necessary, and that was all they wished for. Far from desiring comfort, they rejoiced in the thousand privations which gave them greater liberty of heart and mind and rendered union with God the easier."

These dispositions which are ever so agreeable to God were not without their reward. What we are going to relate is so singular that one cannot help perceiving an invisible hand extended to protect the community. After the fire, a barrel about two-thirds full of common wine was found in one of the vaults. Not only had it received no damage, but the quality was judged much improved. During their stay at the Hôtel-Dieu M^{de} d'Youville had it drawn as necessity required. The barrel soon became so empty that the stream ran to the thinness

of a straw. The sister whose duty it was to draw the wine informed the Superior, and inquired whether she should continue. "Continue, without ceasing" was the answer, and she did continue as usual during the space of two months and a half, that is from the last day of September till December 15th, when they left the Hôtel-Dieu.

In spite of the poverty of the country at this time, especially at Montreal where the fire had impoverished a great many families, the people did what they could to rebuild an institution which now enjoyed the greatest public sympathy. Handsome subscriptions were sent from London. Even the poor Indians of Caughnawaga and Lake of Two Mountains offered trinkets of silver, blankets, knives and, indeed, everything they could afford.

Before the winter set in, that portion of the house intended for the infirm men was completed, and with two sisters to take care of them, they took up their abode in the new hospital on the 23rd of September, 1765.

M^{de} d'Youville pressed the work forward with her customary energy. She writes in 1766: "After much pain and anxiety, we were able in December to take possession of a part of our new house: the community, the poor of both sexes, the foundlings and the boarders.

We have been very much aided by the gentlemen of St. Sulpice."

The remaining buildings were not completed till 1767. The new church was solemnly blessed on the 30th of August of that year.

The following incident we record in M. Sartin's own words: "One day, two of the sisters went to M^{de} d'Youville's room on particular business. After a few moments she said to them: "I have a dollar which I wish to dispose of as I do not like to carry money." Searching in her pocket, she drew forth not *one*, as she expected, but a handful of dollars; and instinctively, as it seemed, examining the other pocket, she took out a second handful of dollars and laid them on the table with the first. Overcome by emotion, M^{de} d'Youville raised her eyes to heaven and joining her hands cried out: "*Ah! mon Dieu, je suis une misérable!*" My God! how unworthy I am!

ASSISTANCE MIRACULEUSE.

P. 225



Imp. P. Dien, 30, r. Hautefeuille, Paris.

Millin sculp.

M^{me} D'Youville, étonnée et confuse d'avoir trouvé ses poches miraculeusement remplies d'argent, bénit Dieu de ses soins paternels, sur l'œuvre qu'il lui a confiée.

CHAPTER XVI.

M^{de} d'Youville acquires the Seigniory of Châteauguay on which she builds a grist mill. She constructs a large two-story house at Point St. Charles. — Account of the different buildings at Isle St. Bernard, etc. —

The income of the General Hospital was, as we have shown, greatly diminished by the conquest. The emigration further reduced the value of landed property, especially the great estates which had been granted by the kings of France under a noble tenure. It was one of the conditions of the treaty that the estates of those Canadians who refused to become British subjects were to be disposed of within eighteen months, or else were to be confiscated by the English Crown.

M^{de} d'Youville had already in the year of the cession conceived the project of permanently

endowing her work for the poor by the purchase of some of this landed property at the reduced price for which it was then selling. We are made aware of her views by a letter which she wrote on January 2, 1765, to M. Montgolfier then in France.

The estate which finally attracted M^{de} d'Youville's attention was the Seigniorship of Châteauguay, situated about twenty miles from Montreal, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence at Lake St. Louis. This noble estate contains a frontage of six miles on the river by nine miles in depth. It had been originally granted, in 1673, to M. Lemoine de Longueuil, one of whose sons bore the name of Châteauguay, and, in 1706, was sold to the family Robutel de Lanoue. At the time of which we write, this seigniorship had become the property of M^{lle} de Lanoue by a deed of cession from her brother who had returned to France.

This lady was one of M^{de} d'Youville's boarders. She offered her the estate on very easy terms: a certain amount to be paid in cash and a life rent which M^{lle} de Lanoue only wished to receive in so far as it was necessary for her support.

In order to raise the sum required for this purchase, M^{de} d'Youville obtained from the King's representative, General Murray, per-

mission to dispose of a small seigniory and some other lands at Chambly belonging to the hospital.

However, before the purchase of the Seigniory of Châteauguay could be completed by the signature of the parties, the hospital was burned to the ground, May 18, 1765, and M^{de} d'Youville and her community were reduced to extreme destitution. Nevertheless, she considered herself bound by her promise, and trusting to divine Providence for the fulfilment of these engagements, on the 8th of June, just eighteen days after the fire, she signed the deed by which the Seigniory of Châteauguay and the Isles à la Paix in the St. Lawrence were acquired for her community and which have since been a source of considerable revenue for the General Hospital.

It is true that this extensive estate possessed no actual income,—it was little else than a great unsettled and unbroken forest, and, indeed, remained for some years, in spite of its great prospective advantages, only a cause of outlay and difficulty.

To meet this new burden, M^{de} d'Youville entered on the work of improvement and settlement with her habitual zeal and energy. She visited the estate frequently in all seasons, and, although nearly seventy years of age,

performed these laborious journeys in a sleigh or a rough two-wheeled cart.

At that time, we need hardly say, there were few tenants. The Manor-house,* a small building close to the water's edge, on the Isle St. Bernard, was situated between the location of the present convent and the quay where steamers now stop. Behind this little mansion, she constructed, to supplement some other buildings already erected, a stone barn still in use.

To meet the requirements of the law, near the small chateau was a wind-mill † where the grain of the tenants was ground into flour. The latter was covered, in 1865, with a dome-like roof and remains a not unsightly relic of the past.

One of M^{de} d'Youville's most important improvements was the erection of a new grist-mill for the use of her tenants; as they had settled on the mainland, and the manor and wind-mill, as we have seen, were on an island, access was difficult for carts loaded with grain. Fortunately, there existed excellent water-power on the mainland of the seigniory. A wooded and rocky promontory about a mile

* The Manor-house built in wood measured 20x50 feet.

† Probably built soon after the proclamation of the ordinance of July 4, 1686, obliging all seigniors to erect mills within a year.

from the present village of Châteauguay, where a good stream, since called the river Châteauguay, runs over a bed of boulders was admirably adapted to become the site of a water-mill. The stream at the place where it was necessary to construct a dam was nearly four hundred feet wide, but the favorable nature of the ground made the task of building it, considering the magnitude of the undertaking, comparatively an easy one.

The first thing was to clear the primeval forest, and so great was the zeal of the sister who directed the work that she insisted on cutting down with her own hands the first tree, after the repeated invocation "*O Crucave*" to implore the divine assistance on what must have appeared to these poor nuns so vast an enterprise. A canal two hundred feet long had next to be cut across the promontory to receive the water raised to a high level by the dam, to conduct it to the mill, and thence, when it had accomplished its work, carry it to the lower reach of the stream below. The mill itself was solidly built of stone. Besides the grist-mill, which the seignior was by law obliged to establish for his tenants, the nuns constructed a saw-mill and added other industrial establishments.

The seigniory under the nuns' wise adminis-

tration,* increased rapidly in population. The flour mill was soon in constant demand to grind the grain produced from the well-cultivated fields, and with the other industries, became, in course of time, a source of considerable revenue to the General Hospital.

The mill built by M^{de} d'Youville in 1769, stood till 1839, when it was found necessary to construct a new one. The engineer consulted for the purpose was of the opinion that no better site could be found, although the country was then all cleared and surveyed, than the forest lot selected three quarters of a century before by M^{de} d'Youville. The new mill was therefore built on the old site.

In 1856, another grist-mill was constructed higher up the stream, on the opposite bank, and the old one was sold and subsequently converted into an axe factory. It was burned some years later, but the solid walls of masonry still stand erect. Its fine dimensions, the striking spot ornamented by stately elm trees on which it stands, the rush of broken waters no longer retained by dam or dike, give to the erstwhile

* It has often been remarked that whenever religious are the lords of the manor, settlement takes place rapidly, and the condition of the tenants is better than that of those living under lay lords or superiors. (Vide: "The Monastery" by Sir Walter Scott, and works by other authors.)

grist-mill,— especially as seen by the traveler from the high-way which follows the opposite bank of the river,— a most picturesque appearance.

To show how indefatigable were M^{de} d'Youville's labors for her community and the poor, we may mention that she built about this time a large two-story stone house at Point St. Charles for the laborers on the farms of the hospital and to be used as a summer residence for the nuns and other inmates of the convent.

But to return to the Isle St. Bernard and its more recent history. Three years after M^{de} d'Youville's death, in 1774, a convent in stone was erected; it was rebuilt on the same foundation in 1831, and repaired in 1881, when a beautiful chapel was also added. On the hill behind stands a summer-house surmounted by a gigantic crucifix.* From this summer-house

* In 1832, the cholera was raging in Canada. R. P. Grenier, then the parish priest of Châteauguay, ordered public prayers and the erection of crosses in different places in the parish to obtain the cessation of the epidemic. The sisters were among the first to comply with the injunction.

The plain wooden cross of 1832 was replaced in 1854 by the crucifix known to have surmounted the main altar of the first parish Church in Montreal, and at the inauguration of which M^{de} d'Youville had assisted to implore the cure of the infirmity (a sore knee), of which mention has been made in this Life. The present crucifix was placed in its stead in 1893.

there is an extensive view of both shores of the St. Lawrence, comprising a beautiful and now well-settled country with its many towns, villages and spires.

Adjoining the convent are neat farm buildings to garner the crops of the fertile fields which the sisters have succeeded in putting under cultivation.

A little further away is the presbytery or priest's house, the abode of a resident chaplain.

These wonderful results indicate that the blessing of God has been with M^{de} d'Youville and her companions, that the holy work of charity in which they are engaged, their spirit of prayer, their mortified lives and self-denying frugality in order to give to the poor, have pierced the skies.

If one glass of water given in God's name is not to be without its reward, how much more must not the self-immolation of our good nuns draw down God's blessing on their work.

CHAPTER XVII.

M^{de} d'Youville's virtues as described by M. Satin.

M. Satin in his interesting Life of M^{de} d'Youville says: "It was only a heart penetrated by the maxims of religion and formed in the school of the Divine Master that could present us with this picture of the most ardent zeal, the tenderest and most generous affection and perfect forgetfulness of self. None could better appreciate M^{de} d'Youville's virtues than her companions who had them constantly before their eyes. But, although all the Christian virtues were the object of her endeavors, nevertheless, as in the case of other holy persons, there were certain virtues she cherished in a more remarkable degree and for the practice of which she felt a greater attraction. Thus, it was remarked in this saintly woman how the most critical and desperate circumstances seemed only to revive and increase her confi-

dence in God. This reliance had its source in faith so lively as to be exclusive of all, even the slightest, doubt or apprehension. In moments of difficulty she trusted calmly and with confidence in God's providence ever attentive to the requirements of His children.

“This perfect abandonment to Providence produced admirable submission to whatever it pleased God to ordain or to permit, however contrary to her natural inclinations. Her favorite maxim was to submit to God in all adversity. She dwelt ever on the reflection: ‘It is God's will; we must submit with a docile heart.’

“Not only the inmates of the convent, but also all those who had occasion to meet her were charmed with her courtesousness and the affability of her manner.

“Her charity made no exception of persons; nevertheless, it was in behalf of the poor, whom she had taken as her portion, that it was manifested in an especial manner. Besides taking her share with her sisters in the daily service of the wards, like a tender mother towards her children she visited the poor individually, sympathized with the sufferings of the infirm, and had always words of consolation to offer them.

“This charity was the more admirable for

being united to perfect patience. She bore rebuffs and rudeness without heeding them or she found excuse for them.

“When any of the sisters had recourse to her in their troubles, it was always with the tenderest affection that she endeavored to console them.

“The novices were to her as her own children; she showed them on every occasion the warmest affection, and encouraged them in the practice of those virtues which belong to the state of life they had chosen.

“M^{de} d'Youville had nothing more at heart than to maintain in her community the love and practice of poverty. Her food did not differ in anything from that of her sisters and of the poor. In dress she was as little exacting as the others and wore patched clothes. Everything in the sisters' rooms, even to the least article of furniture, spoke of poverty and the absolute renouncement of bodily ease and comfort.”

Her whole life was one of trials and crosses. We can thus explain her special devotion for the feasts of the Holy Cross, which like that of the Sacred Heart, called forth her tenderest emotions. These feasts are still celebrated in the church of the community with the greatest solemnity and devotion.

CHAPTER XX.

M^{de} d'Youville's illness and death. — Her last words. — Remarkable appearances. — General belief in her sanctity. — Process of canonization begun at Rome in 1890.

In the autumn of 1771 M^{de} d'Youville's health began to visibly decline. She was then in her seventy-first year. In November, she was so weak as to be unable to leave her room, and although she still continued to direct the affairs of the community, her sisters observed that her speech was somewhat affected.

Their worst fears were realized, when on December 9th, M^{de} d'Youville had a paralytic stroke which deprived her of speech and of the power of moving.

Under the care of her physician and of an experienced nurse, (one of the good sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu,) she rallied so as to be able to make her confession, and even — supported by her sisters — to take a few steps in her bedroom. She was again able, although with diffi-

culty, to converse with those around her. The ever profound affection of the community for their Reverend Mother seemed to increase at the sad prospect of so soon losing her. They were unceasing in their prayers and to one another they whispered tearfully: "If God would deign to leave her to us, even in her present state, what a pleasure it would be to nurse and take care of one so beloved!" But God in His wisdom had decreed otherwise. On the thirteenth of the same month M^{de} d'Youville had a second stroke which left her, for some time quite unconscious. She recovered from this latter attack sufficiently to speak to her sisters. She said: "It is God's will, dear sisters, we must submit."

Shortly afterwards she made her confession and received the Holy Viaticum.

The same day she made her will in which she regulated, that in case of need, her sons should be provided for by being received into the hospital.*

The final attack came on December 23rd,

* Her elder son, some years afterwards, resigned his parish and spent the rest of his life in the hospital where he died, in 1778.

Her younger son, without becoming a resident in the hospital, preserved the most friendly relations with the nuns, frequently visited the convent and took a special pleasure in conducting the community devotions.

when surrounded by her sisters, she peacefully yielded her soul to God. Her last words to them were pronounced in a tone never to be forgotten: "Dear sisters, be always faithful to the duties of the state of life which you have embraced, walk in the path of regularity, obedience and mortification;—but, above all, let the most perfect union ever reign among you."

It was at half-past eight in the evening that M^{de} d'Youville breathed her last.

About that same hour, M. Jean Delisle de Lacailleterie, well known in Montreal as a man of learning and a scientist, was walking near the wall of the town on the St. Lawrence side, when suddenly looking in the direction of the General Hospital he observed in the sky above that building a luminous and regularly formed cross. Surprised at the sight of so wonderful a phenomenon, he called out to one of his friends to look in the same direction, and they were both convinced of the reality of this remarkable apparition. Neither of them had heard of M^{de} d'Youville's death, as it was not made public until the next day. On perceiving this extraordinary sign, M. Delisle exclaimed: "Ah! what else has befallen these poor Grey Nuns,—is this a token of joy or of sorrow?" Several persons in the St. Lawrence suburb also saw



Imp. M. Dien, 32 r. Hauteville, Paris.

Milla sculp.

Mes chères sœurs, marchez toujours dans les voies de la régularité, de l'obéissance et de la mortification; mais surtout faites en sorte que l'union la plus parfaite règne parmi vous.

the luminous cross, so that the following day when M^{de} d'Youville's death was known to the public, this phenomenon became the general topic of conversation.

Another remarkable occurrence took place the same day at Châteauguay. A young man of twenty-one who was accustomed to accompany M^{de} d'Youville on her journeys to and from the seigniory, and had continued to do so until the time of her illness, on the day of her death went as usual to feed the cattle. Alone, and being under no control, he was doing it in a wasteful manner, when he heard M^{de} d'Youville's voice exclaiming, "Do not waste the hay!" Much surprised, as we may well believe, he searched the barn and saw no one. When he returned to the house he inquired if M^{de} d'Youville had arrived. Such a question surprised everyone and brought forth the exclamation from all that M^{de} d'Youville was not in a state of health to make her coming even possible. The remarkable occurrence deeply impressed the minds of those who were entrusted with the patrimony of the poor, and was accepted as a lesson to practice economy in the discharge of their duties.

The obsequies took place on December 26th. M. Montgolfier officiated at the solemn Mass of *Requiem*, and the remains were conveyed to

the vault of the convent church amid the tears and the regrets of her bereaved children.*

It is related that the great concourse of people who thronged to M^{de} d'Youville's funeral showed more inclination to invoke the departed one than to pray for her. The popular judgment thenceforward proclaimed her a saint; but over a century elapsed before the Church, in 1890, bestowed upon her the title of Venerable. Some years previous to this, His Grace, the Archbishop of Montreal, had decided to begin the ordinary process of inquiry as to the reputation of sanctity, virtues and miracles of this servant of God. It was sent to Rome, together with the supplicatory letters of many Bishops and other illustrious personages, ecclesiastical and civil, with the result that His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. decreed (April 28, 1890,) the introduction of the process for M^{de} d'Youville's canonization.

In concluding this Life, the editor, although feeling painfully his deficiency in the eloquence and learning such a subject demands, nevertheless consoles himself with the reflection that at

(*) These precious remains now repose in the vault of the church of the Grey Nunnery on Dorchester Street.

least he has spared no care or diligence as was in his power to bestow in the preparation of this little work, which has been to him a labor of love. He would fain add his prayers to those of M^{de} d'Youville's spiritual offspring, and of the faithful in general, that our Venerable Servant of God may soon be raised to the altars of the Catholic Church, and thus that she may become our recognized advocate in Heaven.

END.

APPENDIX.

Special ward for Irish orphan girls. Work of the sisters during the year of the ship fever 1847-48. — Progress of the community since 1840. — Missions. — Special mention of those in Manitoba and Northwest Territories. — Mode of travelling in that country until late years. — The Land of the Red Cross. — The new Grey Nunnery. — Houses founded at St. Hyacinth, Ottawa and Quebec. — General statistics.

The noble work begun by M^{de} d'Youville and productive of so much good to religion and to society when she was called to her reward, has continued up to the present time to extend its sphere of usefulness.

Mention of some of the services it has rendered may be interesting to our readers.

In 1823, at the request of the gentlemen of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, a special ward was opened for the reception of Irish orphan

girls. This good work was continued in the Grey Nunnery until 1846, when St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum of Montreal was founded and given in charge to the Grey Nuns. Reverend Sister Forbes, whose memory is still cherished in the hearts of all those who had the advantage of knowing her, but especially among the Irish Catholics of Montreal, was the first Sister appointed to care for these motherless children. She was then in her twentieth year, and endowed with all the qualities which could endear her to them. After fifteen years of devoted labor in this ward she was elected Mistress of Novices, but the dear orphans had always the foremost place in her affectionate heart. In 1853, the devoted mother again gladly accepted the direction, of the asylum, and spent there the last twenty-four years of her life, remaining until within a few days of her death, in 1877, in the midst of her loved and loving family of orphans.

Passing over several years of good and faithful service, we reach 1847, the year of the ship fever. An anonymous writer gives the following account of the part taken by the Grey Nuns during this dire epidemic as related to him *viva voce* by one of the sisters.

The horrors of that period, caused by the

frightful famine and the terrible plague which followed and made Ireland desolate, can never be forgotten. The beautiful green fields of that ordinarily fertile country this year refused food to the population. Death in its most frightful form stalked through the land, and thousands died in their cabins or lay uncoffined on the roadside. Hundreds and thousands of others fled across the sea to seek on a foreign shore that peace, plenty and happiness denied them in the land of their forefathers. They turned their eyes toward America, the Eldorado of their fondest hopes, and bright was the picture which their imagination drew of a life in the Western World. Alas! they carried with them the germs of the contagious disease; many died on shipboard and were buried in the ocean's depths, where the foamy billows alone sang their funeral dirge; others landed on the shores of Canada only to succumb to the malady.

On the 17th of June, 1847, the news reached the Grey Nunnery that hundreds were dying unaided and unattended on the shores at Point St. Charles. The Superior, at this time the Venerable Sister Elizabeth Forbes, in religion Sister McMullen,* of Glengarry, believing there

* A sister of Sister Forbes, mentioned in connection with the Irish orphans.

must be truth in the report, sent for Sister Sainte-Croix to accompany her, and visiting the locality without further delay, found to her astonishment and sorrow that for once report fell short of the truth. Acting promptly and decisively, she collected all the facts and sent them in the form of a report to the Emigrant Agent, requesting power to act so as to ameliorate the fate of the unfortunate Irish immigrants. Consent was at once given, and she was authorized to act as she thought best, and to hire as many men and women as she deemed necessary to aid in the noble work; these assistants would be paid by the Department upon attestation by the sisters.

All preliminaries settled, Sister McMullen retraced her steps homeward with a heavy heart, for, like Abraham of old, she had gathered the fagots and prepared the funeral pile,—the victims alone were wanting.

It was the hour of recreation. The sisters, old and young, were gathered in the community-room, the conversation was animated, and, from time to time, peals of laughter issued from one group or another. The Superior entered and the sisters arose to receive her. Having taken her seat in the circle, she said after a short pause: “Sisters, I have seen a sight to-day that I shall never forget. I went to Point St.

Charles and found hundreds of sick and dying huddled together. The stench emanating from them is too great for even the strongest constitution. The atmosphere is impregnated with it, and the air filled with the groans of the sufferers. Death is there in its most appalling aspect. Those who thus cry aloud in their agony are strangers, but their hands are outstretched for relief. Sisters, the plague is contagious." Here the Venerable Superior burst into tears and with a broken voice continued: "In sending you there I am signing your death warrant, but you are free to accept or to refuse."

There was a pause of a few seconds during which each sister saw herself once more kneeling in imagination before the Altar steps, again hearkening to the Bishop's solemn warning before she pronounced the irrevocable vows:

"Have you *considered attentively* and *reflected seriously* on the step you are now going to take? That, from this time forth, your life must be one of *sacrifice*, even of *death*, if the glory of God or the good of your neighbor requires it?"

"Yes, My Lord; and I am willing to undertake the task with God's help."

Such were the words once uttered by each of those who now were called on to prove their fidelity. There was no hesitation, no demur.

All arose and stood before their Superior. The same exclamation fell from their lips: "I am ready!"

Sister McMullen knew the courage of her spiritual daughters, as M^{de} d'Youville knew that of her companions. Eight of the willing number were chosen, and the following morning they cheerfully departed to fulfil the task allotted to them.

On arriving at Point St. Charles, three large sheds from one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet long and forty or fifty feet wide met their view. The little band of volunteers dispersed among the sheds with the persons whom they had engaged to assist in the work of mercy. What a sight before them! "I nearly fainted" said one of the sisters, relating her emotions on that eventful day, "when I approached the entrance of this sepulchre. The stench suffocated me. I saw a number of beings with distorted features and discolored bodies lying heaped together on the ground looking like so many corpses. I knew not what to do. I could not advance without treading on one or another of the helpless creatures in my way. While in this perplexity, I was recalled to action by seeing the frantic efforts of a poor man trying to extricate himself from among the prostrate crowd, his features expressing at the same time

an intensity of horror. Stepping with precaution, placing first one foot and then the other where a space could be found, I managed to get near the patient, who, exhausted after the efforts made to call our attention, now lay back pillowed on — Dear God what a sight! — two discolored corpses in a state of decomposition. We set to work quickly. Clearing a small passage, we first carried out the dead bodies, and then, after strewing the floor with straw, we replaced thereon the living who soon had to be removed in their turn.”

In the open space between the sheds, lay the inanimate forms of men, women and children, once the personification of health and beauty, with loving and ardent hearts, now destined to fill a nameless grave. More sick immigrants arrived from day to day; new sheds had to be erected. These temporary hospitals stood side by side, each containing about one hundred and twenty common cots, or rather plank boxes littered with straw, in which the poor fever-stricken victims frequently lay down to rise no more. Eleven hundred human beings tossed and writhed in agony, at the same time, on these hard couches. The hearse could hardly suffice to carry off the dead. The number of sisters, increased till none save the principal officers, the superannuated and those absolutely necessary

to maintain the good order of the establishment, remained at the Grey Nunnery. The ardor of the sisterhood continued unabated, and, until the 24th of the month (June), no sister had been absent from the muster-roll. On this eventful morning, two young sisters could no longer rise at the sound of the matin bell. The plague had chosen its first victims, and more followed hourly after, until thirty lay at the point of death. The professed nuns of the establishment, numbering only forty, could not suffice to superintend their institution, tend their sick sisters, and assist at the sheds. There were at this time twenty novices who eagerly requested to be allowed to fill up the vacancies in the ranks. Their offer was accepted and side by side with the professed sisters did they toil and triumph, — for what else is death when it gives the martyr's crown? Fears were entertained for the safety of the convent, fears that increased still more when seven sisters were called to receive their reward.

Overcome by fatigue and with aching hearts the remaining ones saw themselves obliged to withdraw for a few weeks from the scene where the voice of sympathy and the hand of charity were so greatly needed. It was to their great relief that they beheld the good Sisters of Providence take their place at the bedside

of the suffering and dying. Shortly after, the devoted religious of the Hôtel-Dieu obtained the permission of the Bishop to leave their cloister walls and assist in the good work.

Meanwhile, the Venerable Mgr. Bourget, the priests of the Seminary, the Jesuits and several other members of the clergy, who from the first days, had been unrelenting in their efforts to afford help and comfort to the poor exiles, continued their heroic ministrations. Many were the grateful souls who carried with them beyond the grave the remembrance of their generous benefactors, not a few of whom soon followed to receive the crown reserved for martyrs of charity. Survivors recall to this day with feelings of love and gratitude the draught doubly refreshing because held to their parched lips by the consecrated hand of a bishop or by that of a devoted priest so worthy of the name of Father.

The Grey Nuns also cherish the most heartfelt recollections of the good offices of the kind Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame. Kept away by the nature of their occupation from the scene of contagion, these good ladies otherwise evinced most effective sympathy to all.

In the month of September the Grey Nuns resumed their heroic task at the sheds. They

continued their charitable labors not only during the year 1847-48, but also later on when the cholera replaced the typhus.

After the Cross came the Crown. The number of postulants to the religious life so increased during this same year (1848,) that the motto of the nunnery was verified: *In hoc signo vinces.*

Among the arrangements for better attendance upon the unfortunate victims of the typhus was the classing of men, women and children in different sheds. Children were counted by hundreds, the greater number as yet free from the malady, but exposed to contagion and liable to be stricken down from day to day. There were gathered together the infant taken from its dead mother's breast, or from the arms of some older one trying in vain to still its cries, the creeping baby shrieking for the father and mother who would nevermore respond to that call, and older ones sobbing and frantically trying to escape in search of the parents already beneath the sod. This scene in the children's shed was beyond description. Their wailing was heard far and wide, adding a new pang to the agony of the expiring father or mother.

His Lordship, Bishop Bourget, later endeavored to find homes for the unfortunate waifs.

An appeal was made to the country people, who faithful to the voice of their Pastor, came from all the surrounding parishes of the diocese, and each family adopted one or more of the little strangers.

Eight Grey Nuns, among whom is the present Superior General, are still living of the thirty who caught the typhus at the sheds and were at death's door.

The memory of these events which furnish one of the most touching episodes in the history of the city of Montreal will pass away with the actors of the sad drama. All that now remains to attest the fact, is a little plot of ground at Point Saint Charles, on which has been raised a monument formed of an immense boulder taken from the bed of the St. Lawrence, and bearing the following inscription:—

TO PRESERVE FROM DESECRATION THE REMAINS OF
6,000 IMMIGRANTS WHO DIED OF SHIP FEVER
A. D. 1847-48, THIS STONE IS ERECTED BY
THE WORKMEN OF MESSRS. PETO BRASSEY AND BETES
EMPLOYED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE VICTORIA
BRIDGE, A. D. 1859.

As previously observed, the increase in number of aspirants for admission into the commu-

nity did not become notable until after the first century of its existence had elapsed, and under circumstances which, humanly speaking, should have retarded its progress; that is, after missions had been established abroad, and after the work of the sisters during the trying period of pestilence and death as related above.

As explanation, to a certain extent, of the slow increase during so many years, it may be stated, that up to 1840, owing to the tenor of the Letters patent limiting the number of the community, and for other cogent reasons, the ecclesiastical superiors had decided that the number of professed sisters should not exceed thirty at any given time. This prohibition having been cancelled in the year 1840, subjects could be freely admitted, and the community thereby enabled to respond to calls for branch houses.

Fifty-eight of these have been established since 1840. Of this number, three are now distinct houses no longer connected with the Grey Nunnery of Montreal. Others have been discontinued at different periods.

We shall here mention the establishments at the present time subject to the Superior General at Montreal, and the works accomplished therein.

PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

In Montreal: The Mother-House and novitiate, 3 hospitals with dispensaries, 2 homes for the poor, 7 orphan asylums, 2 workrooms where plain sewing is taught, 1 foundling asylum, 2 homes for girls out of situation and a night refuge attached to one of them, 1 institution for blind children, 5 infants' schools.

Homes for the poor and orphan asylums at St. Benoit, Longueuil, Varennes, St. Jean d'Iberville and Chambly.

Schools at St. Benoit, Châteauguay and Côte-des-Neiges; infants' schools at Longueuil, St. Jean d'Iberville and St. Jérôme; 1 hospital at St. Jean d'Iberville.

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA AND N. W. TERRITORIES.

In the town of St. Boniface: The Vicarial House and novitiate, 2 academies; 2 industrial schools for Indian children; 1 hospital; 1 orphan asylum; 1 home for aged and infirm women.

Schools are established in the following parishes and missions: St. François-Xavier, St. Norbert, Ste. Anne des Chênes, St. Jean-Baptiste, St. Albert, Lac Labiche, Isle à la Crosse, Athabaska and Providence, (Mackenzie.)

There are hospitals at Calgary, St. Albert and Edmonton; and industrial schools for Indian children at Qu'Appelle and Dunbow.

UNITED STATES.

Ohio. In Toledo : 1 hospital, 1 orphan asylum and 1 school.

Massachusetts. In Salem : 2 orphan asylums and 1 school. In Lawrence : 1 orphan asylum, 1 hospital and dispensary. In Boston : Working Girls' Home. In Worcester : 1 orphan asylum and 1 home for the poor.

In Cambridge : 1 hospital for incurables.

New Jersey. In Morristown : 1 hospital.

Minnesota. In Minneapolis : 1 school and 1 orphan asylum.

North Dakota. In Fort Totten : 1 industrial school for Indian children.

In all these different missions visits are made to the sick and poor at their homes and assistance given to the needy. The Sisters also keep night watches with the sick and lay out the dead.

Special interest is attached to the first founded of the above establishments — that of St. Boniface, Red River or Selkirk settlement, now the Province of Manitoba, as well as to those

which sprang up, in after years, throughout the Great Lone Land.

In the early days of M^{de} d'Youville's labor for the poor, she was, as we related, aided by the merchants of the Northwest who furnished work for her community. These benefits were not forgotten, and the annals of the Grey Nunnery reveal that at a very early period, the sisters — without the slightest foretoken of the spread of their work in the future — took pleasure in the prospect of an establishment in the *Pays d'en haut*. In 1844, by opening a house of their order at St. Boniface, — which was to be subsequently followed by many others in the Northwest, — M^{de} d'Youville's spiritual daughters have in some manner repaid the good offices of those early traders.

Very different then was the mode of traveling in that region from what it is now. The trip is at present an agreeable one, accomplished in sixty hours in luxurious cars offering every accomodation.

When four Grey Nuns departed, on April 24, 1844, they embarked at Lachine, nine miles from Montreal, in birch canoes for a long and perilous journey of two months. The greater part of it had to be performed in the frail canoes. When the party reached rapids or other obstructions to navigation, the sturdy oars-men

shouldered the canoes and the baggage, the sisters following behind. These breaks are called *portages*, and over sixty of them had to be made. One of the sisters also had to be carried a considerable portion of the way, for, slipping as she disembarked from one of the canoes, she so seriously injured her ankle that she suffered torture during the remainder of the journey and was lame the rest of her life.

It was not until June 21st, that the sisters reached St. Boniface where they were welcomed with joy by Mgr. Provencher, Bishop of the place, and at whose solicitation they had come to undertake the education of youth and to attend to the works of charity pertaining to their vocation, as circumstances would require.

It is remarkable that M^{de} d'Youville's uncle, M. de la Verandrye, in 1738, the same year that his niece began her work for the poor at Montreal, in one of his expeditions through the North-West passed by the very spot where the Grey Nuns' first convent is now situated in St. Boniface.

This two-story wooden building one hundred feet by forty-five, was, owing to divers disappointments and accidents, slowly constructed. Begun in 1845, it was still far from being completed when the sisters moved into it, in 1847.

Up to that time their accommodations had been

very scanty. They occupied, for a few months, an old stone building cemented with clay, through which the rain made wide openings. Obligated to seek new quarters, they moved to rooms adjoining the vestry of the cathedral, whence, as from their previous residence, they repaired, twice a day, to apartments in the basement of the bishop's house, where they had opened schools for children of both sexes very shortly after their arrival. The boys remained under the sisters until 1854.

Various works of education and charity intrusted to the direction of the Grey Nuns have grown and prospered. The small apartments which witnessed their early beginnings have given place to spacious convents and a hospital fitted with all modern conveniences. These, together with the other buildings set apart for the works already mentioned, form an interesting group surrounding the first convent. This latter is situated on the eastern bank of the Red River, and became at a later date a Vicarial House. It outlasted all the other edifices reared by Mgr. Provencher, the saintly founder, first missionary and first bishop of St. Boniface, who went to his reward in 1853. The cathedral and residence he had left behind him were wiped out by fire December 14, 1860.

Upon his worthy successor, Mgr. Taché,

devolved the task of rebuilding the cathedral and episcopal residence, while the sisters bore their share of the burden in erecting the several establishments of education and charity committed to their charge.

It was on June 22, 1894, that Archbishop Taché went to reap the reward of his labors. It is needless to say that so irreparable a loss threw the whole country into mourning; but the sorrow was nowhere so keenly felt as at St. Boniface.

Not foreseeing the calamity awaiting them, everyone had been busy for weeks past making preparations for the celebration of the Grey Nuns' golden jubilee at St. Boniface, to take place on the 21st. Alas! the scene had changed, — grief in all its intensity, took the place of joy. Never to be forgotten are those days of June, 1894.

As already stated, several branch houses have been established in the North-West. Each of these has a local superior subject to the Superior Vicar residing at St. Boniface, who, in turn, owes allegiance to the Mother General at Montreal.

Extracts of letters from the sisters of those later establishments will convey an idea of what they experienced before reaching their destination. We quote from letters written in 1858:

“Our journey from Montreal was by land and water. Owing to a few mishaps, it took a week to reach St. Paul, Minnesota. There a numerous caravan from Fort Garry* awaited us. Neither bed nor board was to be found on our way; we purchased water-proof spreads and blankets to repose on, impermeable bags for our clothing, and a supply of bacon, hard biscuit, tea, sugar and butter. When we joined our conductors we were assigned an antiquated cart on large high wheels without a scrap of iron on or about them, odd in appearance, but well adapted to the roads that had to be traversed where bogs, miry grounds and streamlets abound. In this, we and our belongings were drawn by an ox.

For weeks, and more frequently for months, we travelled through vast prairies of high grass undulating in the breeze like the waves of a sea, as far as the eye could reach. There were streams to be forded and oftentimes a river barred our onward path. These were not always fordable, and with no bridge nor boat at hand, means had to be devised for reaching the opposite bank. In some cases, the men constructed rafts on which we and our baggage were carried across; at other times cart-wheels were taken off, fastened together and covered

* Now the city of Winnipeg.

with a tarpaulin, forming a boat which could be towed from bank to bank.

“In fine weather our caravan jogged onwards, and in time we learned to enjoy it. We halted at noon and at sunset, except when a better site for encampment for the night could be reached further on.

“The oxen were then let loose to graze, search was made for fuel, the kettle put on to boil, and the meal partaken of. After the evening repast prayers were said, the tents pitched, and the waterproof spreads thrown on mother earth. On this couch, wrapped in our blankets, we slept as best we could until the next morning, when at an early hour, the summons to rise was given. The tent once lowered, morning prayers were offered up, and the men went in search of the oxen left free during the night, the fire was rekindled and breakfast prepared. As soon as the meal was over, the dishes washed and the fire carefully extinguished, we mounted, and our caravan began another day's journey. On, on we went through boundless solitudes whose silence was interrupted only by the song of the birds, the chirping of the locusts, the murmur of the breeze, the rustling of the leaves, the creaking of the cart-wheels, the call or shout of the drivers urging on some weary or stubborn oxen.

“Such is life on the prairies when the sun shines. But when the tempest rages, and with the wind blowing, the lightning flashing, the thunder pealing and the rain pouring in torrents, a halt is made on the prairie or in wild woods, under a simple tent which every gust of wind threatens to blow away, and no other bed than the wet ground, pleasure is no longer a reality.

“In one instance, however, these rain-storms would be welcome. It was when the dry grass afforded no security against the rapid advance of prairie fires, so awful to behold rushing to meet or to pursue travellers. For want of other means another fire is started to the leeward; but this is not always considered safe.

“Further cause of anxiety is the possibility of meeting hostile Indians and of sharing the fate of so many others at their hands.

“At all times and in all weathers, we are followed, surrounded and literally devoured by the most voracious creatures in creation. They swarm about in daylight, they revel during twilight, increase in boldness under cover of night, when, with peculiar effrontery, they “sound their own trumpet.” I allude to the mosquitoes, those venomous gnats whose stings subject their victims to the most unbearable torture.”

Sisters travelling to the most remote points, such as Athabaska and McKenzie River, after having spent three months as described above, have to pass another month in flat open boats before reaching their destination.

On their arrival after a long and tiresome journey, — of which many details are omitted in the foregoing lines, — they are glad to take possession of the humble dwelling prepared for them, and feel great pleasure in being surrounded by the poor Indians whose speech they cannot understand it is true, but in whose every feature a hearty welcome can be read. These first manifestations of good will are an encouragement to accept every privation and suffering in view of bettering the condition of these unhappy tribes.

If the greeting was everywhere most cordial among the roaming children of the plains, it must be ascribed to but one cause. The Indians had learned long since to look upon the Oblate Fathers as their most sincere and most disinterested friends. They it was who had brought them the priceless boon of faith and expected nothing in return save a docile acceptance of their teachings and the putting into practice of the lessons imparted.

What wonder then, if, when they had announced the coming of helpers in their apostolic

labors, and who, in a special way, were to care for their little ones, they should be ready to receive us with open arms, for the Indians are all fondness for their offspring."

For the most part, children who are to be instructed share the narrow lodgings of the sisters and partake of their teachers' meagre pittance which is almost invariably fish. Sisters still in those remote missions have never during a lapse of twenty-nine years tasted bread. After working hard during the day they, for a time, had only buffalo robes to repose on at night.

People unacquainted with the Indian missions would find it difficult to form an idea of the hardships to be endured and of the degree of self-denial to be practised. In their inmost heart the sisters enjoy the hundred-fold promised here below to those who forsake all to follow the call of the Divine Master.

When their health fails, or when they otherwise become unfit for their task, if able to undertake the journey homeward the sisters are recalled and gladly welcomed by the mothers and sisters whose sympathy and affection had constantly followed them; but never can these sisters forget the former scene of their labors and sufferings; they ever anxiously await tidings of what is going on there,

as they had erstwhile in that far distant land looked forward to the arrival of the *yearly* express from the home and the friends they had left behind them.

A lapse of sometimes twenty, thirty or more years between the departure and return of these sisters had wrought many changes. It was a source of gratification to see how their community had increased in number,—but Heaven had asserted its rights, and many former companions were missing. These were “not lost but only gone before,” while another painfully noticed loss could not be retrieved.

Few were the ruins that remained of the dear old General Hospital hallowed by the virtues of so many devoted souls, since its foundation in 1694, but especially dear to the Grey Nuns for its having been successively the abode of their Venerable Foundress, her companions and their followers, for one hundred and twenty-four years.

Although clinging fondly to the home alive with so many precious memories, nevertheless, for reasons—some of which are already mentioned in this work—the Grey Nuns finally became convinced that the further occupancy of the convent could be but of short duration.

Search was made for a spacious location in a salubrious part of the city, on which to erect a

building of greater proportions than those of the old hospital. The choice fell on "The land of the Red Cross," so called for its having been the scene of tragical events to which we shall refer. This property comprised twelve acres bounded by four of the principal streets of the city: Guy, Dorchester, St. Matthew and St. Catherine.

One hundred and fifty years ago, this part of the Island, from the summit of the Mountain to the pebbly shore of the St. Lawrence, was a thickly wooded forest. Where Dorchester Street is to-day, there was then a narrow path worn by the passers-by from Lachine, St. Laurent and neighboring settlements. It bore, however, the high sounding title of the King's Highway. Here and there, at irregular distances, a few farms bordered on this primitive thoroughfare. At the point where Guy Street crosses Dorchester, lived an honest farmer, Jean Favre and his wife, Marie-Anne Bastien. Being an industrious couple, they were supposed to have realized a good sum from the produce of their prosperous farm, which sum, in all probability, they hoarded away in some corner of their dwelling.

On the spot where now stand the iron gates at the entrance of the avenue leading to the Convent Church, was a small house occupied by

a petty farmer named Belisle. The demon of covetousness had taken hold of his soul and the unfortunate man brooded constantly over his neighbor's supposed wealth and resolved to become its possessor.

One evening in the month of May, 1752, when the sun had sunk behind the mountain and the last echoes of the *Angelus* bell had ceased to vibrate on the air, a stealthy form, lured on by the evil one, glided through the falling darkness towards the dwelling of Favre. Suspecting no evil, the honest man sat quietly smoking near the hearth whence a brisk fire cast a mellow light through the room, showing the table with its two places set for the evening meal. Rising, the farmer took from his pocket a key, opened a cupboard near hand, drew forth a small well filled sack and added to its contents the proceeds of the day's sale. Through the open shutter, Belisle, knife in hand, watched from without Favre's every movement. He broke into the dwelling and drawing a pistol from his belt shot down the old man and finished him with the knife. The wife, terrified by the report, rushed in from an adjoining room and was at once attacked by the murderer; he plunged the knife repeatedly into her breast and crushed in her skull with the blow of a spade which he found near by.

The disappearance of the old couple gave rise to surmises. Search was made and the horrible crime discovered. Suspicion rested on Belisle; he was arrested, tried and convicted. The following copy of the "*Requisitoire du Procureur du Roi*," dated June 6, 1752, shows that the terrible punishment of breaking alive was then in force under the French regime in Canada. Belisle was condemned to "torture ordinary and extraordinary," then to be broken alive on a scaffold erected in the market-place (the present Place Royale) of the city.

This awful sentence was carried out to the letter. Belisle's body was buried in Guy Street and the Red Cross erected to mark the spot, as is fully described in the following historically valuable document:

Extract from the Requisition of the King's Attorney.

"I require in the name of the King that Jean-Baptiste Goyer dit Belisle be arraigned and convicted of having wilfully and feloniously killed the said Jean Favre by a pistol shot and several stabs with a knife, and of having likewise killed the said Marie-Anne Bastien, wife of the said Favre, with a spade and a knife; and of having stolen the money that was in their house; in punishment where-

of that he be condemned to have his arms, legs, thighs and back bone broken, at the hour of noon, on a scaffold which shall be erected for that purpose in the market-place of this city: then, on a rack, his face turned towards the sky, he be left to die. The said Jean-Baptiste Goyer dit Belisle, having been previously put to torture ordinary and extraordinary, his dead body shall be carried by the executioner to the highway which lies near the house lately occupied by the said Jean Favre and his wife. The goods and chattels of the said Jean-Baptiste Goyer dit Belisle shall be confiscated to the King, or for the benefit of those who may have a right to them, the sum of three hundred livres fine being previously set apart, in case that confiscation may not be made for the benefit of His Majesty.

“ Given at Montreal, this sixth day of June, 1752.

(*Signed*) “ FOUCHER. ”

On this ground stands the present Grey Nunnery, a vast structure built of stone with three stories, basement and attic. Only a portion of it was ready for occupation when the community and the poor took possession.

As related in this work, M^{de} d'Youville took

charge of the General Hospital on the 7th of October, 1747. One hundred and twenty-four years later,—on the 7th of October, 1871,—her precious remains were conveyed to the new convent as if to take possession of it likewise, The cortege was formed of her spiritual daughters and their poor.

In the first instance, M^{de} d'Youville found five poor invalids in a most wretched condition; in the second, as many as five hundred invalids, orphans and foundlings followed her precious remains to a home where every comfort was in store for them. When, in 1771, the death of M^{de} d'Youville cast a dark cloud of gloom over the convent, seventeen grief-stricken sisters accompanied her remains to their resting-place; in 1871, two hundred and fourteen with happy hearts escorted the same to the new home which they were to brighten. One hundred and ten had, since the foundation, taken their departure with the hope of meeting the Venerable Mother awaiting them above.

From 1871 to 1878, the present community-room was used as a chapel. But with the help of a kind Providence, a long felt deficiency was supplied and a further portion of the building fitted for occupation. A wing still remains unbuilt for want of funds.

In the centre of this building that measures

five hundred and forty-four feet on Dorchester Street, a fine church is erected. the entrance thereto being at a distance of two hundred feet from the street. The handsome façade measures seventy-six feet and its height from the ground to the extremity of the cross on the spire is two hundred and twenty-six feet.

The church is in the Roman style of architecture of the middle ages and tastefully decorated. The marble altars, rich paintings and fine organ, are for the greater part, gifts from generous friends of the institution.

A door to the right of the vestibule leads to the portion of the building occupied by the sisters; another on the opposite side, to the apartments and wards for the poor and other inmates.

The main entrances to the institution are on Guy and St. Matthew Streets.

The convent is among the favorite places of interest to tourists and it is from the note-book of one of them that we get the following account of a visit recently paid the Grey Nunnery. Our friendly visitor describes the reception room, the halls and spacious corridors and continues :

“ I was shown into the large pharmacy where several sisters were busied among their phials, bottles and boxes. Adjoining it is the dentist's apartment. This same corridor contains a suite

of apartments devoted to a variety of skillful and artistic work. In one room is done the illumination of cards, mementoes, addresses; here, also, we noticed some exquisite hair-work; the chains, flowers and landscapes in natural hair give proof of great ingenuity and ability. Workers in wax occupy another room and display is made of many beautiful specimens of their handicraft. The next door opens upon a printing office. Even the cloister recognizes the necessity of the press! The sisters do only what printing is required for the wants of the community.

“ ‘*Miscuit utile dulci*’ I reflected aloud.

“ ‘*Comment Monsieur?*’ inquired the nun conducting our party.

“ ‘The useful and the agreeable go hand in hand in your convent,’ I answered.

“ ‘O yes, and here is further proof of it,’ she said as she ushered us into a room filled with splendid draperies and church vestments in silk or velvet, all heavy with rich embroideries in gold.

“ In another corridor we were shown the candle-works and tapers of all sizes for use in the church service. Long ago, no doubt, the good nuns made the candles for the use of the community, — but that was long ago, before the days of petroleum, and then of gas, and now

of electricity. What changes! What surprises since the founding of this institution! Yet the one great thing remains unchanged, and will remain so,—the necessity of mortification and self-denial, and the love of the Cross: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*

“My reflections were interrupted by our entry into the shoe-shop and an adjoining room where knitting-machines were running.

“‘Instead of going higher, I shall now conduct you to the lower flat’ said our guide.

“Proceeding downwards, I glanced at the large wash-room, with its rows of monster rolling tubs, mangle, wringer, etc., all in motion, as the whir of the steam gave notice. The vapory atmosphere made me soon turn away, and following my leader into another hall, I saw on each side, the apartments occupied by the older orphan boys. Rows of cots in their snowy drapery filled the dormitory, which was a model of neatness and of order. The measured tread of little feet drew my attention to the opposite side, and the door thrown open, showed a large room in which some sixty-five or seventy boys were undergoing military drill. The youngsters seemed to enjoy it, and willingly obeyed every order of the young man who was putting them through the exercises. At a sign from

the sister, the young regiment formed a single file on both sides of the room and saluted us with a well-sung chorus in three parts. As we turned to go, the little fellows raised their caps with perfect grace, and then gave us the military salute. I never saw a finer set of boys ranging from nine to twelve years of age.

“ ‘What an extensive building’ I exclaimed, as, hall after hall, crossing each other, puzzled my vision — a veritable labyrinth.

“ ‘Do not fear,’ was the laughing assurance of our guide; ‘we’ll find the way out again.’

“Turning aside, she pointed out the finely laid out grounds of the convent, and then ushered me into the *Baby-boys Ward*. Some fifty or sixty little fellows, from eighteen months to seven years of age, were gamboling about their play-room. Some of the younger ones were yet perambulating on all fours, others rocking on wooden horses, but all filled the air with the lusty shouts that characterize this stage of manhood. The sisters seemed not at all incommoded by the noise of the youngsters, though there was a veritable babel of sounds, and to the remark I made in allusion thereof, they smiled and said it was play hour, and unless the little folks became unreasonably boisterous, they were left unchecked. ‘I have only to give a sign for silence’ said the sister,

‘and my little troop obey.’ In proof of which, placing herself so as to be seen by all, she raised her hand, placed a finger on her lips, and lo! as if by magic, every little fellow stood as still as a statue, with finger on mouth. It was a surprising sight. The next moment, at a given signal, the statues became all life, and the babel of noise burst forth with renewed vigor. Thanking the sisters, we moved on from hall to hall, till we reached a succession of dormitories appertaining to the men’s ward. Ascending we were admitted to the fine church, which bears the name of The Holy Cross. Here I admired the beautiful white marble altars with their rows of statuary, and the paintings which decorated the walls. A sister was performing a fugue on the organ which is a very fine one. Its rich sounds and full pedal bass filled the whole edifice, while the soft notes sounded like musical whispers in the distance. Treading lightly down the aisles of the edifice, I examined the massive iron columns on their base of solid gray cut stone. There is a plainness and yet a richness in that kind of interior work which I prefer to the brilliant coloring seen in too great a proportion of churches.

“Passing through the vestibule with its doors of solid oak, we turned into a large

corridor, innundated with the rays of the mid-day sun. To our right, as we proceeded onwards, was the spacious infirmary for the old men, then came the ward which they generally occupy. Among over eighty invalids sheltered in this ward, there are specimens of almost all kinds of suffering humanity. Although styled the 'old men's ward' it grieved me to see there, young men reduced to a life of inaction, using rolling chairs to replace the limbs unable to support them. These occupants of rolling-chairs were busily engaged in games of chess, dominos, or cards, while the lovers of the "weed" were in an adjoining smoking-room puffing away like so many engines.

"A higher story of the building is occupied by boarders who desire quiet with facilities for assisting at church ceremonies. There are bed-rooms, a large dining-room, a spacious drawing-room, etc., exclusively for their use.

"Still going upwards, I was agreeably surprised at the beautiful view from the windows on both sides of the wing. Facing Dorchester Street, the eye roved over a considerable extent of the St. Lawrence spanned by its gigantic bridge, the verdant shores on the opposite side, pretty country villages and towns, steamers and boats of many kinds speeding with the current downwards towards Quebec

or spinning rapidly into port. The pretty St. Helen's Island was plainly visible. It was at one time a military post; it is now a park.

“Turning from outdoor contemplation, our cicerone pointed out rooms in all directions whose occupants were either bedridden, aged or harmless old women in their second infancy. Entering the large ward, crowded with inmates, were old and young busily chatting, laughing and singing. Here again the varied phases of human ills were manifest—the lame, the blind, the paralytic, etc., occupying chairs of every variety. Many drawn up by the windows were busily plying their knitting-needles and enjoying the view.

“On each side of the flats are tribunes or galleries, where the inmates of the wards can assist at all the services going on in the church. Leaving this apartment, we proceeded down the old women's reception hall and thence stepped out on their spacious gallery. Oh, what a glorious sight! The vast building stood forth in all its splendid proportions, with out-houses and accessories, seated as it were in the midst of verdure and flowers. The beautiful mountain rose up in the rear, its sides dotted with rich chateaux of various architecture.

““I am going to take you still higher up, to the orphan girls' apartments' said our kind

guide. We were shown through school-rooms, the refectory and a large dormitory, with beds of all sizes, from those for girls of twelve or fourteen years, to the tiny cots for little ones hardly over their second summer. Precision, order and cleanliness reigned everywhere. The curtains, coverlets, etc., were all snowy white. The floors, devoid of paint, were as yellow as gold, and the stained ones shone like glass. The rooms I had just gone through were vacant, but a busy hum and singing were signs that their ordinary inmates were in the vicinity. A door was opened and I entered the recreation-room, a spacious apartment beautifully lighted up by windows on three sides, while the view from the end opposite was a perfect panorama. Among the hundred children we met here, some twenty little ones from seven to ten years, were gaily dancing round a May-pole, winding and unwinding the colored ribbons with graceful dexterity. Quite a number of little toddlers were occupied in a game of *grab*, each one trying to seize her neighbor's doll, or mount a rocking-horse. The ribbons of the May-pole hung loose — the dance was ended. The elder girls formed into rows, and keeping time with their own voices, went through a graceful calisthenic exercise. I left the room pondering over the gaiety reigning

throughout the whole establishment. I had to acknowledge that, after all, convents were not prisons.

“My reflections were still running on, when I was recalled to myself by the announcement that we were entering the Crèche (Nursery).

“I could hardly realize that from fifty to sixty cribs were before me, many among them having an occupant. I suppose I must, manlike, have formed very erroneous ideas of a nursery, for I expected a perfect *squall* owing to the number. I happened to give utterance to this thought and was answered by a sister who remarked ‘there is a lull in the storm but let one start a cry, every one of the others will soon join in.’

“Retracing my steps after having seen the greater part of the establishment, I again found myself at the entrance door which I had crossed nearly three hours previous. I stood for a moment to look at the Red Cross pointed out to me through a side window, then with thanks to the Sister for her kindness, and begging her to accept an alms for the establishment, I crossed the threshold and passed out into the rush and bustle of the world bearing with me a truly pleasant impression of my visit to the Grey Nunnery.”

Three flourishing communities of Grey Nuns, situated respectively in St. Hyacinth, P. Q., Ottawa, Ont., and Quebec, rejoice in tracing back their origin to the House founded by M^{de} d'Youville, and continue to foster the spirit of their Venerable Foundress. Although independent of the Grey Nunnery of Montreal, and organized under separate administrations with full control of their several interests and internal management, they pursue their labor of love in perfect union of heart with the Mother-House, and, with the divine blessing, co-operate most effectually in the accomplishment of the same noble object. From humble beginnings, and with no other reliance than Providence, they have increased in numbers and prospered beyond the most sanguine expectations of their founders. In response to numerous appeals, they have branched out in several localities, and in these new centres they render to religion and society most important services by the charitable and educational establishments placed under their charge.

The Hôtel-Dieu of St. Hyacinth, P. Q., was founded in 1840. Since that time, missions have been established in the following localities, all of which remain subject to the General Superior at St. Hyacinth.

IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

Homes and industrial houses for the poor and orphans at St. Hyacinth, Sorel, Marieville, Sherbrooke, Farnham and St. Denis.

In the United States: 2 homes for poor invalids and orphans at Lewiston, Me., 1 hospital, 1 orphan asylum and infants' school at Manchester, N. H.

The Hôtel-Dieu of Nicolet, P. Q., was also founded in 1886, by four sisters from St. Hyacinth. It is, however, independent of the latter. This rising community has established 1 hospital and 1 school, for the benefit of the Indians of the Blood Reserve at MacLeod, N. W. Territory.

The Convent of the Grey Nuns of Ottawa was founded in 1845. The following are its dependent establishments:

IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

At Ottawa: Young Ladies' Literary Institute; 12 parochial schools; 2 homes for the poor; 2 orphan asylums; 1 foundling asylum. At Pembroke: 1 boarding school; 1 parochial school and 1 hospital; parochial schools in Eganville, Orleans, Embrun, Hawkesbury and Casselman.

IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

Parochial schools at Aylmer, Montebello, Buckingham, Hull, Maniwaki, Point Gatineau, St. François-du-Lac and Pointe du Lac; boarding schools at Aylmer, St. François-du-Lac and Pointe du Lac; 1 home for the poor at St. François-du-Lac.

IN THE UNITED STATES.

New York. At Buffalo: 1 boarding school and 2 parochial schools. At Plattsburg: 1 boarding school and 1 parochial school. At Ogdensburg: 2 parochial schools, 1 hospital and 1 orphan asylum.

Massachusetts. At Lowell: 2 parochial schools. At Haverhill: 1 parochial school.

The Convent of the Grey Nuns of Quebec, was founded in 1849. The following are its dependent branches:

IN THE PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC.

At Quebec: 1 home for aged and infirm women; 1 orphan asylum; 1 boarding and day school for little boys; 6 parochial schools and 1 infants' school. At Rimouski: 1 home for the poor, 1 orphan asylum, 1 boarding and day-school. Hospitals and homes for the poor at St. Thomas de Montmagny, Labrador (Pointe aux

Esquimaux), St. Ferdinand de Halifax. Boarding and day-schools at Cacouna, d'Eschambault, Somerset, Carleton (Baie des Chaleurs), St. Nicholas, St. Joseph de la Beauce, Malbaie, St. Anselme, St. Charles de Bellechasse, St. Alexandre, Cap Rouge and Cap St. Ignace. Asylums for the insane at Beauport and St. Ferdinand de Halifax.

At Charlottetown, P. E. I. 1 hospital.

At Fall River, Mass. U. S. 1 hospital and 1 orphan asylum.

In the present year (1895) the number of professed Grey Nuns is 1353. The charitable and educational establishments committed to their care, number 130.

In the former 6,860 poor inmates are provided for, and in the latter 21,594 children are instructed.

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