

CHAPTER V.

State of the Church—Liquor traffic with the Indians—Quebec Seminary—
The tithe—The parishes—Rural piety—The Bishops of Quebec.

The seigniorial system was the form which Canadian society assumed in its social, economic, and administrative phases, so far as such phases applied to local, as distinct from general, conditions. But side by side with the governor and the intendant at Quebec, and the seignior in the local seignior, stood the bishop and the clergy, both regular and secular. It need hardly be pointed out that though there were moral disorders in the province which the Church strove to suppress, and which, consequently, made its rule and discipline irksome to the erring, the habitants as a class, and the majority of the French Canadians, were devotedly attached to the clergy.

In the very early days of the colony the services of the Church came to the settlers by the ministrations of the Recollet and Jesuit Fathers. With the exclusion of the Recollets, in 1632, after the occupation of Quebec by Kirke, the Jesuits alone had the spiritual direction of the colony. The Superior of the Jesuits was the ranking ecclesiastic, and his influence was certainly not less than that of the governor. In fact, the Jesuit Fathers understood the needs of the colony more intimately, and much more disinterestedly, than the governors. Canada at that time came within the metropolitan jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Rouen; a jurisdiction which, it appears, might not have been altogether valid had its claims been detuntely challenged. The Archbishop of Rouen exercised his metropolitan authority in Canada through the person of a *grand-vicaire*. Until 1653 this office had been held by the Superior of the Jesuit Fathers. In 1653 the Sulpicians first came to Montreal, under the charge of the Abbé Queylus. Before leaving France the Abbé Queylus had been created *grand-vicaire* for Canada by the Archbishop of Rouen. Consequently, he took precedence

in Canada on his arrival over the Superior of the Jesuits. But the circumstances of the colony, particularly the growth of population, and the unfortunate beginning of the traffic in brandy with the Indians, made the presence of some higher ecclesiastical authority imperative. The question of erecting Canada into a diocese had been under consideration for some time, but before this was effected episcopal authority was exercised in Quebec by Monseigneur de Laval. Monseigneur de Laval came over in 1659 as Vicar-Apostolic, holding the titular dignity of Bishop of Petræa, *in partibus infidelium*. For the first fifteen years of his connection with Quebec, Monseigneur de Laval laboured under the difficulty of his nominal rank; for the title of Vicar-Apostolic did not enable him to speak with such unquestioned authority as he certainly needed, in view of the disorders which he deemed it essential to suppress. But it was not till October, 1674, that, by two separate bulls, Canada was erected into a bishopric and Monseigneur de Laval nominated as its first bishop.

The first document which he appears to have signed under his new title was, appropriately enough, a written response, dated March, 1675, to a deliberation of the doctors of the Sorbonne over the points at issue in the brandy controversy. It may be interesting to add, at this point, that one of the first public documents, if not actually the first, which Monseigneur de Laval signed after reaching Quebec to take up his duties at Vicar-Apostolic was a *mandement*, ordering a procession to the Church of the Jesuit Fathers in Quebec, in grateful recognition of their services, both to the city and to the colony. Its historical value, as showing from an ecclesiastical source the appreciation of the work of the Jesuit Fathers, makes its quotation, in part, not out of place.

MANDEMENT.

Pour Ordonner de faire trois processions à l'Eglise des Jésuites.

FRANCOIS DE LAVAL.

Par la grâce de Dieu et du Saint-Siège Apostolique, Evêque de Petrée, Vicaire Apostolique en toute l'étendue du Canada et pays adjacents. A tous ceux qui ces présentes lettres verront, Salut.

Après avoir reconnu et considéré les grands services rendus à Dieu par

les Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus en toutes ces contrées tant au regard de la conversion des sauvages que de la culture de la colonie française, et spécialement par le soin charitable qu'ils ont apporté en l'administration de la paroisse, tant pour le spirituel que pour le temporel, et ce l'espace d'environ trente ans, de laquelle administration nous les aurions déchargés lorsque nous sommes arrivé en ce pays, nous avons jugé juste et raisonnable qu'il y ait à jamais quelque marque de reconnaissance de la part de la dite paroisse de Québec, envers les dits Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus, et à cette fin nous avons ordonné que tous les ans, au premier jour de janvier que se célèbre la fête de la Circoncision ou du St. Nom de Jésus qui est le titre et patron de leur église de Québec, aussi bien que de leur Compagnie, on s'assemblerait à la paroisse à l'heure ordinaire de Vêpres, d'où le curé avec le clergé et peuple iront processionnellement à l'église des dits Pères pour y chanter les Vêpres qu'il aurait dû dire à la paroisse, et après le sermon et le salut, on retournera processionnellement en la dite paroisse.

“Nous avons de plus ordonne que le même sera fait le troisième décembre, fête de Saint François-Xavier, et le trente et unième de juillet, jour de la fête de leur glorieux patriarche St. Ignace, lorsqu'elle tomberait en un dimanche et que le peuple en serait averti le dimanche d'auparavant, et exhorté de contribuer le plus qu'il lui serait possible à cette reconnaissance, et voulons que la dite ordonnance soit insérée dans les registres de la paroisse et que copie en soit donnée aux PP. de la Compagnie de Jésus.

“Donné en notre demeure ordinaire de Québec, sous notre sceau et seing et de notre secrétaire le quinzième janvier mil six cent soixante.”

“FRANÇOIS, EVÉQUE DE PETRÉE.”

Part of the delay in the erection of Quebec into a diocese came from a prolonged discussion as to the immediate higher jurisdiction under which the new diocese should be placed. Louis the Fourteenth expected Quebec to continue as an integral part of the Gallican Church, under the control of a French metropolitan. Pope Clement, on the other hand, wished it to pertain immediately to the Holy See. Eventually the king yielded the point, retaining, however, the right of nomination, after having endowed the new bishopric with the estates of the two royal abbeys of Maubec and Lestrées.

The wisdom of this adjustment of the issue has never been questioned; and it has been of great moment to the Church in Canada; for the conquest of 1760 brought no interruption to the spiritual interests of the colony, whereas the confusion which would have arisen had Quebec been attached to Rouen may readily be conceived. The direct dependence of Quebec upon the Holy See has involved no breach in the course of a long attachment; and it has, at the same time, kept the Church in Canada free from the misfortunes which have befallen the Gallican Church since the days of 1789.

It was unfortunate that the policy which Monseigneur de Laval felt obliged to adopt on his first arrival in Quebec, brought him into direct conflict with the civil authorities, as represented by the governor, and later by the intendant also. The great evil which Monseigneur de Laval discovered in progress was the unrestricted sale of intoxicants to the Indians. The civil authorities, supporting in this case the financial interests of the merchants and traders, overlooked the evil, or even supported it on certain well-known pretexts. There could be no doubt that a savage debauched by liquor was less shrewd at bartering than a savage sober. But once the Indians had become confirmed in their thirst for spirits, it mattered very much to the merchants of Quebec and Montreal whether they could furnish the supply, or whether the Indians went instead to the Dutch and English merchants at Albany. It was argued that of the two evils, French brandy, sold in Montreal, could be considered less harmful than the rum sold at Albany under the English flag.

The real difficulty was that both nationalities used spirits unscrupulously as a bait to tempt the Indians to trade. The French feared the complete loss of their traffic, if they were to be deprived of the right to compete with their English rivals upon equal terms. If the fur trade had been diverted into English hands it would have meant the financial ruin of the colony; and it is easy to see that no governor cared to be charged with such a responsibility.

On the other hand, Bishop de Laval, scorning any sordid pretext of state, lifted the issue to a high moral ground, and made it a question of the Indian's welfare. If the English were utterly to ruin the savages with liquor, was that any argument that the French should be guilty of the same

evil? From a statesman's point of view, Monseigneur de Laval might have compromised by admitting the political and economic necessity of the traffic, and being content with its close regulation. But, from the start, the bishop refused to countenance half measures. He used all his influence with the king, and all his high ecclesiastical authority, to bring the traffic to a close. The second mandement which he issued as Vicar Apostolic was a notice that the penalty of excommunication should attach to those found participating in the evil. In 1661 the penalty of excommunication was imposed on a Quebec merchant for repeated violations of the bishop's injunction. Both documents will be found in the first volume of the *Mandements des Evêques de Québec*. Unfortunately, the bishop was not sustained in his position, either by the public feeling of the colony, the civil authorities at Quebec, or by the king at home. Drunkenness on the part of the Indians and on the part of the townspeople of the province, especially where the military were stationed, developed into an evil with which the Church could not cope successfully. Bishop de Saint-Vallier, in 1724, went to the extent of forbidding the parish curés to grant absolution to keepers of taverns (cabaretiers).

In Monseigneur de Laval's episcopate this regrettable controversy very much embittered the relations between the bishop and the governor, taking the form, ultimately, of somewhat unseemly quarrels over questions of precedence and the right observance of points of etiquette, as between the civil and the ecclesiastical head of the colony. The subject forms a chapter of Canadian history which any historian would gladly overlook.

Bishop de Laval's most enduring work was the establishment of the Seminary at Quebec. The scope which he conceived for this institution was never realized, inasmuch as his successor in the episcopate differed from the views of the founder as to the eventual organization of the diocese, and the relation of the Seminary to the discharge of parochial duties. The Seminary dates from a patent issued by Monseigneur de Laval on March 26th, 1663. After reciting the general advisability of establishing means for the instruction of the clergy, the document reads:—

“*Considérant qu'il a plû a là Divine Providence nous charger de l'Eglise naissante du Canada dit la Nouvelle-France; et qu'il est d'une extrême importance dans ses commencements de donner au Clergé la meil-*

leure forme qui se pourra perfectionner des ouvriers, et les rendre capables de cultiver cette nouvelle vigne de Seigneur, en vertu de l'autorité qui nous a été commise, nous avons érigé et érigeons dès à présent, et à perpétuité, un Séminaire pour servir de Clergé à cette nouvelle Eglise, qui sera conduit et gouverné par les supérieurs que nous ou les Successeurs Evêques de la Nouvelle-France y établiront, en suivant les règlements que nous dresserons à cet effet. . . .”

The relation of the Seminary to the parishes which Bishop de Laval desired, he states as follows:—

“Nous désirons que ce soit une continuelle Ecole de vertu et un lieu de réserve d'où nous puissions tirer des sujets pieux et capables pour les envoyer à toutes rencontres, et au besoin dans les paroisses, et tous autres lieux du dit Pays, afin d'y faire les fonctions curiales, et autres, auxquels ils auront été destinés, et les retirer des mêmes paroisses et fonctions quand on le jugera à propos, nous réservant pour toujours et aux successeurs Evêques du dit pays comme aussi au dit Séminaire par nos ordres, et des dits Sieurs Evêques, le pouvoir de révoquer tous les Ecclésiastiques qui seront départis et délégués dans les paroisses et autres lieux toutes foix et quantes qu'il sera jugé nécessaire, sans qu'aucun puisse être titulaire, et attaché particulièrement à une Paroisse, voulant au contraire qu'ils soient de plein droit amovibles, révocables et destituables à la volonté des Evêques et du Séminaire par leurs ordres. . . .”

The endowment of the Seminary Bishop de Laval ordained as follows:

“Et d'autant qu'il est absolument nécessaire de pourvoir le dit Séminaire et Clergé d'un revenu capable de soutenir les charges et dépenses qu'il sera obligé de faire, nous lui avons appliqué et appliquons, affecté et affectons des à présent et pour toujours toutes les Dixmes de quelque nature qu'elles soient, et en la manière qu'elles seront levées dans toutes les Paroisses et lieux du dit pays pour être possédées en commun et administrées par le dit Séminaire . . . a condition qu'il fournira la subsistance à tous les Ecclésiastiques qui seront délégués dans les paroisses et autres endroits du dit Pays, et qui seront toujours amovibles, et révocables au gré des dits Evêques et Séminaire par leurs ordres. . . .”

In both the latter provisions the views of the bishop were not in accord with the feeling of the colony as a whole, for eventually the establishment of curés was made permanent, and the tithes were made payable directly into the presbytery for the incumbent of the parish.

The tithe itself was originally fixed at one-thirteenth. In answer to the many complaints against this rate, on account of the general poverty of the habitants as a class, in 1660 it was "relaxed" to one-twentieth. The present rate dates from 1679, when the Sovereign Council established it at one-twenty-sixth. This rate has remained in force since then, the assessment being made on grain only.

Bishop de Laval completed the organization of his province by the erection of parishes to supersede the missions which had served till then. In general, the limits of a parish corresponded with the boundaries of a seigniorie; in some cases, however, seigniories were subdivided, in others grouped together. This grouping can be seen in the list compiled by the editors of the Mandements of the parishes erected by Monseigneur de Laval.

LISTE

Des Paroisses Erigées par Monseigneur de Laval.

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1664 | Québec (Immaculée Conception). | |
| 1678 | { | Ville-Marie (Bienheureuse Vierge). |
| | | Lachine (Saints-Anges). |
| | | Pointe-aux-Trembles (SS. Enfant Jésus). |
| | { | Château-Riché (Visitation, B.V.M.). |
| | | Le Cap (SS. Anges-Gardiens). |
| | | Le Petit Cap (Sainte-Anne). |
| | { | Ste. Foye. |
| | | Gauderville. |
| | | S. Michel (1 paroisse, sans titulaire). |
| | | Roûte S. Ignace. |
| | | Lorette. |

{ Trois Rivières.
 { Nicolet. (1 paroisse, sans titulaire).
 { Godefroi.

{ La Magdeleine.
 { Villiers. (1 paroisse, sans titulaire).
 { Gentilly.

{ La Durantaie.
 { Berthier.
 { Cap St. Ignace.
 { L'île-aux-Oies.
 { La Bouteillerie. (1 paroisse, sans titulaire).
 { Saint-Denis.
 { La Combe.
 { Rivière du Loup.

1684

{ Champlain (Présentation B.V.M.).
 { Ile d'Orléans (Sainte Famille).
 { Beauport (Nativité B.V.M.).
 { Neuville (St. François de Sales).
 { Batiscan (St. François-Xavier).
 { Repentigny (Assomption B.V.M.).

As a rule, the money and the labour for the erection of the church buildings came from the seignior and the habitants. Bishop de Laval insisted from the outset on the use of none but stone churches, and refused consecration to others after 1669. A royal edict of that year made buildings of stone obligatory. Most of the parishes remained in the appointment of the bishop, though a few fell to lay patrons, in consideration of endowments.

Monseigneur de Laval supplemented the work of the Séminaire in 1668 by the establishment of a Petit Séminaire for the instruction of youths destined for clerical life. The Petit Séminaire opened October 9th, 1668, with eight young Canadian boys and eight young Hurons as its first

pupils. In addition to this, an industrial school at Saint-Joachim owed its origin to the bishop's interest. Although Monseigneur le Laval lived to be eighty-five years of age, passing away in 1708, he resigned all active episcopal work in 1684. As the organizer, and to some extent, the founder of the Church in Canada, he holds the foremost place in the minds of all the French Canadian people, and it is confidently expected that within a few years the Holy See will crown the memory of his life by canonization.

Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier, the successor of de Laval, first came to Canada in 1684 as Vicar-General. He was not consecrated bishop until 1688. In regard to certain features of the organization of the diocese, the new bishop differed from his predecessor. In particular, he reversed the former bishop's policy of constituting the Séminaire the beneficiary of the tithes of the province, and of avoiding the establishment of permanent curés in the parishes. In 1692 the parochial system of Canada went back to the system as it then was in France; in other words, incumbents of parishes were no longer to be transferable or removable at the pleasure of the bishop. Monseigneur de Laval's policy in this respect was a distinct departure from all French precedent. He himself justified it on the ground that it more nearly approached the customs of apostolic times.

Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier is remembered as the founder of the General Hospital in Quebec (1692), and of the convent of the Ursulines at Three Rivers (1697). His episcopate was marked by many personal misadventures and misfortunes. Seventeen of its forty years were spent perforce out of Canada; five of them, indeed, as prisoner in England, the ship which was carrying him to Quebec in 1704 falling into the hands of the English, for the War of the Spanish Succession (Queen Anne's War) was then in progress. On more than one occasion the king tried to force him to surrender his diocese, but this he consistently declined to do.

Although an ecclesiastic of great piety and charity, he seems never to have been in full sympathy with conditions in the colony. At first, the crudeness and, in some respects, the degree of freedom and lack of restraint tolerated in pioneer life accorded ill with his sense of decorum, and some of the opinions which he formed of the townspeople of Quebec, especially in the early days of his residence, were not flattering. But a few years

showed him another side to the picture, for, in a long letter written about 1688, describing most minutely the condition of the Church establishments in Canada he pens the following eulogy:—

“Le peuple communément parlant, est aussi dévot que la Clergé m’a paru saint. On y remarque je ne sais quoi des dispositions qu’on admirait autrefois dans les Chrétiens des premiers siècles; la simplicité, la dévotion et la charité s’y montrent avec éclat, on aide avec plaisir ceux qui commencent à s’établir, chacun leur donne ou leur prête quelque chose, et tout le monde les console et les encourage dans leurs peines.

“Il y a quelque chose de surprenant dans les habitations qui sont les plus éloignées des Paroisses, et qui ont même été longtemps sans voir des pasteurs. Les Français s’y sont conservés dans la pratique du bien, et lorsque le Missionnaire qui a soin d’eux fait sa ronde pour aller administrer les Sacraments d’habitation en habitation, ils le reçoivent avec une joie qui ne se peut exprimer; ils font tous leurs dévotions, et on serait surpris si quelqu’un ne les faisait pas. . . Chaque maison est une petite Communauté bien réglée, où l’on fait la prière en commun soir et matin, où l’on récite le Chapelet, où l’on a la pratique des examens particuliers avant les repas, et où les pères et les mères de familles suppléent au défaut des Prêtres, en ce qui regarde la conduite de leurs enfants et de leurs valets.”

This picture of rural piety the bishop supplements by these remarks on the industry of the same people:—

“Tout le monde y est ennemi de l’oisiveté, on y travaille toujours à quelque chose; les particuliers ont eu assez d’industrie pour apprendre des métiers d’eux-mêmes; de sorte que sans avoir eu le secours d’aucun Maître, ils savent presque tout faire. Il est vrai qu’on n’est pas dans le même embarras dans les lieux qui sont plus proches de Québec, mais il y a encore beaucoup à souffrir partout, et la plupart portent avec une grande résignation les souffrances inséparables de leur état, dans un pays où peu de gens sont à leur aise.”

Some idea of the progress made in the erection of parishes during the episcopate of Monseigneur Saint-Vallier may be gathered from the large number of priests which he ordained; ninety in all. The following is a list

of parishes erected between 1692 and 1724, the compilation being that of the editors of the Mandements des Evêques de Québec:—

LISTE

Des Paroisses Erigées par Mgr. de Saint-Vallier.

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 1692 | { | Varenes (Sainte-Anne). |
| | | Trois-Rivières (Immaculée Conception). |
| | | Boucherville (Sainte-Famille). |
| | | La Prairie de la Magdeleine. |
| 1693 | | Charlesbourg (Saint-Charles Bor). |
| 1694 | { | La Bouteillerie sur la riv. Ouelle (Assompt. B.V.M.). |
| | | Pointe de Lévi (Saint-Joseph). |
| 1698 | | Notre-Dame de Foy (Visitation B.V.M.). |
| 1700 | | Cap Saint-Ignace. |
| | { | Cap-Santé (Sainte-Famille). |
| | | Saint-Jean d'Orléans. |
| | | Beaumont (Saint-Etienne). |
| | | Saint-Pierre d'Orléans. |
| | | Saint-Laurent d'Orléans. |
| 1714 | { | Baie Saint-Paul. |
| | | Kamouraska (Saint-Louis). |
| | | La Durantaye (Saint-Jacques et Saint-Philippe). |
| | | Saint-François du Lac. |
| | | Sainte-Anne de la Pérade. |
| | | Saint-François d'Orléans. |
| | | Pointe à la Caille (Saint-Thomas). |
| 1721 | { | Ile Jésus (Saint-François de Sales). |
| | | Beaupré (Saint-Joachim). |
| 1723 | | Terrebonne (Saint-Louis). |
| 1724 | | Lotbinière (Saint-Louis). |

A comparison of this list with that given above for Bishop de Laval will show the growth of population in certain districts. La Durantaye, for example, formed only part of a union parish in 1678; in 1714 it becomes an individual parish. The parish of la Bouteillerie sur la Rivière Ouelle, erected in 1694, is the one whose description has been so delightfully given by the Abbé Casgrain in his *Paroisse Canadienne*. The long break between the year 1700 and 1714 bespeaks the absence of Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier from Canada, during part of which he remained in England.

The organization of the diocese of Quebec was completed with Bishop de Saint-Vallier's episcopate. Succeeding bishops, before 1760, made no alterations but devoted themselves to the work of administration. In the order of succession, Mgr. de Mornay, who served as coadjutor to Bishop de Saint-Vallier from 1714, was given the appointment at the death of the latter. He continued, however, to reside in France, selecting Mgr. Dosquet (titular Bishop of Samos since 1725) to serve as his-coadjutor in Quebec. Mgr. Dosquet was in residence from 1729 to 1732, when, being obliged to return to France, he pressed the king to insist upon Mgr. de Mornay's return to Canada. But Mgr. de Mornay, feeling his strength would not allow him to endure the hardships of the voyage, surrendered his diocese. He died in 1741. Mgr. Dosquet succeeded at Mgr. de Mornay's resignation in 1733, and proceeded to Quebec, returning, however, the following year. His absence obliged the candidates for holy orders to take the journey to France for consecration. At last, in 1739, Mgr. Dosquet withdrew in favour of Mgr. de Lauberivière, who was consecrated the same year. As Mgr. de Mornay officiated as consecrating bishop, attended by Mgr. Dosquet, the ceremony immediately after the consecration of Mgr. de Lauberivière presented the unusual spectacle of three bishops all holding a title from Quebec, being in the same chancel at the same time.

Mgr. de Lauberivière came to Quebec in 1740, but unfortunately died the same year. His successor was Mgr. de Pontbriand, who continued as bishop till the close of the French regime. Mgr. de Pontbriand retired to Charlesbourg while the siege of 1759 was in progress. In a letter written two months after the bombardment he pictured the fearful state of the city in language which conveyed the deep pathos of those trying days. The

letter will be found near the close of this sketch. Within a month after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the aged bishop withdrew to Montreal and still continued to issue *mandements* for Montreal and Three Rivers. Two months before the surrender of Canada to General Amherst, he died, stricken with grief at the wretchedness of the struggle.

Side by side with its parishes and its missions, the Church, directly through its clergy, supplemented by the work of its many orders, carried on extensively the educational system of the province. The educational system of the Province of Quebec is, indeed, one of the very oldest on the continent. Throughout the days of the old regime the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus had their schools and colleges for the instruction of Canadian youths, while the seminaries at Quebec and Montreal offered a training for young men going into holy orders. Mgr. de Laval's patronage of the industrial school at St. Joachim showed that teaching was not altogether confined to the classical branches. For girls, the Ursulines at Quebec, and Three Rivers, and the Congregation de Notre-Dame in Montreal furnished elementary and finishing schools of the very highest order. The Swedish traveller, Kalm, writing of the instruction for girls by the Sœurs de Congregation, said: —

“The Sœurs de Congregation are a kind of religious women different from nuns. They do not live in a convent, but houses in the town and country. In many places in the country there are two or more of them; they have their house commonly near a church, and generally the parsonage house is on the other side of the church. Their business is to instruct young girls in the Christian religion, to teach them reading, writing, needlework, and other female accomplishments. People of fortune board their daughters with them for some time. They have their boarding, lodging, beds, instruction and whatever else they want upon very reasonable terms. The house where the whole community of these ladies live, and from whence they are sent out into the country, is at Montreal. A lady that wants to become incorporated among them must pay a considerable sum of money towards the common stock; and some people reckon it to be four thousand livres. If a person be once received she is sure of a subsistence during her life-time.”

Locally, within the parish, instruction was usually in the hands of the curé. In some of the parishes the curés admitted both girls and boys into the schoolroom, but this practice was expressly forbidden by Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, who further ordered that the instruction of girls should never be in the hands of any but women. Kalm speaks of finding a school-house among the group of buildings including the presbytery which went to make up the centre of almost every parish. Among the Mandements des Evêques de Québec will be found a letter enjoining all the curés to offer instruction in Latin to the children of their parishes, especially those who might be dedicated to the Church. It speaks well for the piety of the habitants that the parochial clergy were for the most part recruited from among the French Canadians proper, and not from priests sent over from France.