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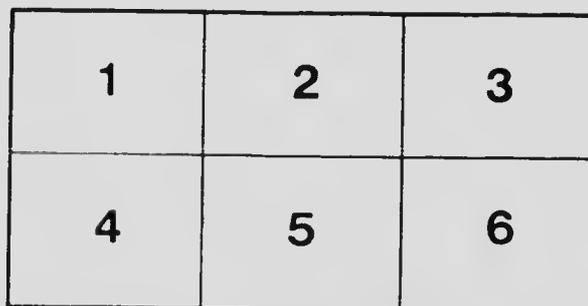
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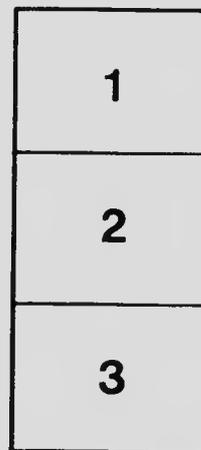
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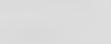
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# The Early Hospital History of Canada

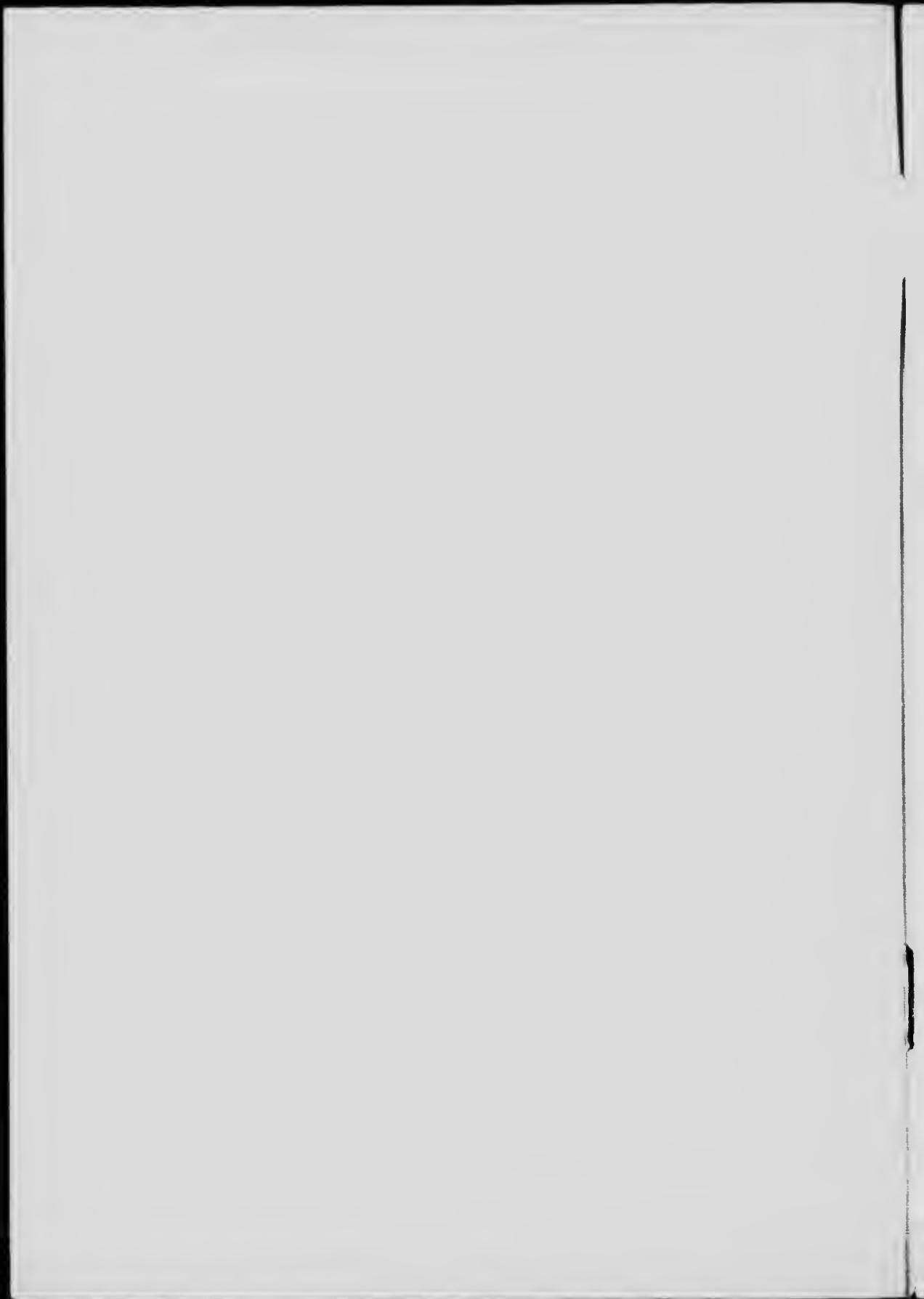
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**Selections from a paper prepared and read by Miss  
M. Louise Meiklejohn, Lady Superintendent of the  
Protestant General Hospital, Ottawa, and Super-  
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# The Early Hospital History of Canada, 1535---1875 A.D.

French Régime

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The early hospital history of Canada is the history of the country itself; it is a tale of heroism and of martyrdom; of Indian massacre, of famine, fire and pestilence, of colonization, of war and of civilization.

The houses of the sick in this country, as in older civilizations, were called *hôtel*, hospice, *hôpital*, without discrimination, and they endeavored to fulfil the mission of modern institutions bearing the same names. At first they were built of logs, the chinks filled in with mud; the rooms were planked and the roofs were covered with bark. They were of necessity surrounded by palisades and fortified with cannon, for "in all Canada," in those days, "no man could hunt, fish, till the fields, or cut a tree in the forest without danger to his scalp. The Iroquois were everywhere and nowhere. A yell, a volley of bullets, a rush of screeching savages—and all was over."

The immediate neighborhood of the hospitals was utilized as a cemetery, where the nuns themselves buried those of their order—and they were many—who did not survive its hardships; and here, also, were buried the patients who did not recover. Near-by was a vegetable garden and a barnyard, which, too, frequently, was their only source of subsistence.

In describing the two chief communities, Parkman says: "It is difficult to conceive a self-abnegation more complete than that of the hospital nuns of Quebec and Montreal. In the almost total absence of trained and skilled physicians the burden of the sick and wounded fell upon them. Of the two communities, that of Montreal was the more wretchedly destitute, while that of Quebec was exposed, perhaps, to greater dangers. The nuns died, but they never complained. Removed from the arena of ecclesiastical strife, too busy for the morbidness of the cloister, too much absorbed in practical benevolence to become the prey of allusions, they were models of that benign and tender charity of which the Roman Catholic Church is so rich in examples."

The first white man to behold Quebec was Jacques Cartier, the Breton navigator, who spent the winter of 1535 on the banks of the St. Lawrence under terrible conditions. In the spring he returned to France with those of his company who had survived the scurvy.

At Quebec, in 1535, he planted the symbol of the Christian religion. In 1541 he re-visited Canada, and took shelter at Cape Rouge, where Roberval had fortified himself, in a vain attempt to obtain a good footing in Canada.

With the passing of Cartier and Roberval, a silence fell upon the whole region from Stadacona to Hochelaga for over half a century. Even the Indians abandoned their villages, for when Champlain sighted Cape Diamond, sixty years later, he found only solitude and the ruins of the fort left by Cartier.

It was not until the year 1608 that Champlain landed at Quebec and laid the foundations of the city. The first building was called "l'Abitation," and was near the site of the present Church of Notre Dame des Victoires. This building served as a residence and as a storehouse for supplies from France and furs from the Indians. A rude drawing of it by Champlain's own hand still exists, and is reproduced in his works.

Up to 1615 the entire population was less than fifty persons, chiefly traders. Fear of death unshriven contributed to tentative settlement only. The colony consisted of the fortified post and a few cabins about the palisades. This year Champlain re-visited France, and brought back with him four Recollet Friars, who speedily raised their altar, and celebrated their first mass ever said in Canada.

Soon the first regular settlers, with their families, came to Quebec. Their names were Abraham Martin (after whom the Plains of Abraham were named), Pierre Desportes, Nicolas Pivert and Louis Hébert, an apothecary.

With Champlain's company, in 1608, was a doctor named Bonnerme, who within the year died from scurvy. The next resident medical man of whom we have authentic record was Adrien Duchesne, a surgeon of Dieppe. He arrived previous to 1620, and his practice extended from Quebec to Three Rivers.

The year of 1621 is marked by the building of the Recollet Convent on the banks of the St. Charles, destined later to become the General Hospital.

In 1625 three followers of Loyola joined the colony.

The next important acquisition was one Surgeon Robert Giffard, who arrived with his family in 1627.

On the 19th July, 1628, the British, under Sir David Kirke, took Quebec. Champlain was conveyed to England. Both Recollets and Jesuits were sent back to France, and among other prisoners taken was Giffard. By the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, in 1632, Canada was restored to the French. That year the Jesuits returned, also Surgeon Giffard, and a year later Champlain came back as Governor. He died in Quebec on Christmas Day, 1635. In 1634 Giffard was granted the Seigneury of Beauport, where he built a substantial stone residence. He was the first visiting surgeon to the Hotel Dieu, and was evidently the medical authority in the settlement. He died in 1648, and must have been an important person in France, as he was followed to Canada by over 300 families from Perche and Normandy.

By 1635 Quebec was only a village, with a few houses. Eighty persons, including the clergy, constituted the entire population.

At this time the Letters, or "Relations," of Father Le Jeune, the Jesuit Superior, who had come out in 1632, were exciting widespread interest in France. They were passed from hand to hand in the court, and universally

discussed in ecclesiastical circles. The conversion of the savages had become a popular subject for prayers, devotions, and fasts.

With the acumen which has ever characterized his order, Le Jeune saw far into the future. He wrote: "If we had a hospital here, all the sick people of the country and all the old people would be there. If a monastery like Dieppe were in New France, the charity of the Sisters would do more for the conversion of the savages than all our journeys and all our sermons."

In response to this appeal the Duchesse d' Aiguillon, niece and heiress of Cardinal Richelieu, lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie de Médicis, resolved to establish a hospital in New France. The Duchesse and Cardinal Richelieu, together, gave 22,400 livres. They obtained, in 1637, from the Company of One Hundred Associates, a concession of eight arpents of land in Quebec for a monastery, and a fief of sixty arpents called Ste. Marie, outside the town. Six workmen were sent from France to clear the land and prepare for building.

Now, St. Vincent de Paul was the spiritual adviser of the Duchesse. Under his guidance she proceeded to the Hotel Dieu at Dieppe, which had been founded in 1155. This institution was controlled exclusively by the Sisters of St. Augustin, the oldest purely nursing order of nuns in existence. They had rigid rules; they were entirely responsible to the clergy and were practically cloistered.

Such was the community from which three nuns were chosen to sail to New France to open a Hotel Dieu under the direction of the Jesuits. The Sisters were to be called Hospitalières de la Miséricorde de Jesus.

On the morning of the 4th of May, 1639, the Ursuline nuns from Tours, with their foundress, Mme. de la Peltrie, joined the Hospitalières at Dieppe. They, too, were coming to New France. Together the communities attended mass that day and said farewell to their native land, and together they embarked for the New World.

After an eventful voyage they reached Quebec on the 1st of August. At the water's edge the entire populace, with Montmagny, the Governor, met the Sisters. The Hospitalières, who take precedence, stepped ashore first, then the little procession walked up the hill (now Mountain Hill) to the Church of Notre Dame de la Racourance (burned 1640), where a thanksgiving service was held. The Hospitalières were then received into a house owned by the Company of One Hundred Associates in the Upper Town, and the Ursulines walked back down the hill to take shelter in a rude building on the wharf.

Next day the Sisters inspected their land. Apparently the workmen had not arrived. The ground was swampy, and not yet cleared of brushwood, so they decided to spend the winter where they were. Hardly were their beds made than the Indians, among whom smallpox was prevalent, arrived in such large numbers that temporary sheds and wigwams were put up for them around the nuns' house. The winter with all its hardships was upon them. Clothing they had none. Water was no nearer than the river below the cliff. For meat they depended upon "l'original" (moose), which the Indians brought in from the hunt, and many died. The dead Indians' furs were kept to cover the sick, and finally the three nuns became ill, and the Jesuits had to nurse the sick. Smallpox raged throughout the cold weather, and every disease incident to filth followed.

By spring the Indians removed to Sillery, three miles distant. The natives had called the hospital the "House of Death," but when they found that in their own villages smallpox had carried off even more victims, they returned to beg the Sisters to follow them, and take up their abode in a building which had previously been erected in the village by Noël de Bruyard, a Knight of Malta. At this crisis the temporary hospital was mysteriously burned, and the nuns were forced to remove to Sillery without awaiting the will of their foundress. Here they attended to the sick and aged, and taught the Indian children.

During the following winter there was so much scurvy that their chapel at Sillery was filled with the sick, and the nuns had to enter the filthy Indian wigwams to care for the inmates, thus soiling their white habits, which they therefore dyed with butternut juice.

While the Quebec Sisters were working out a perilous existence, strange things were happening in France. At La Flèche, in Anjou, dwelt one Jérôme le Royer de la Dauversière, receiver of taxes. One day, while at his devotions, he heard an inward voice commanding him to become the founder of a new order of hospital nuns; and he was further ordered to establish on the island called Montreal, in Canada, a hospital, or Hôtel Dieu, to be conducted by these nuns. But Montreal was a wilderness, and the hospital would have no patients. Therefore, in order to supply them, the island must first be colonized. Dauversière was greatly perplexed.

Again, there was at Paris a young Priest, Jean Jacques Olier, afterwards widely known as the founder of the Seminary of St. Sulpice. He was praying in the ancient Church of St. Germain des Prés, when, like Dauversière, he thought he heard a voice from Heaven, saying that he was destined to be a light to the Gentiles; that he was to form a society of priests, and establish them on the island called Montreal, in Canada, for the propagation of the True Faith. While both he and Dauversière were totally ignorant of Canadian geography, they suddenly found themselves in possession, they knew not how, of the most exact details concerning Montreal, its size, shape, situation, soil, climate and productions. They met one day at Meudon, near Paris, as if by a miracle, ecstatically embraced like old friends, called each other by name, and took a walk in the forest nearby to communicate the details of their visions and to suggest plans for their fulfilment.

They proposed to found at Montreal three religious communities—one of secular priests to direct the colonists and convert the Indians, one of the nuns to nurse the sick, and one to teach the Faith to the children, white and red.

But first they must make a colony, and to do so must raise money. Olier had pious and wealthy parents; Dauversière had a friend, devout as himself, and far richer. Anxious for his soul, and satisfied that the enterprise was of God, he was eager to bear part in it. Olier soon found three others. The six together formed the germ of the Society of Notre Dame de Montreal.

Among them they raised the sum of seventy-five thousand livres (equivalent to about as many dollars at the present day). Then they planned to secure the title to the Island of Montreal, and they succeeded.

The title assured, they took steps to put their plan in operation. First they would send out forty men to take possession of Montreal, entrench themselves, and raise crops; then they would build a house for the priests and two convents for the nuns. Meanwhile Olier was to inaugurate a seminary of priests, and Dauversière was to form a community of nuns in France. The company was soon formed. It was composed of forty-five devout men and women as patrons of the colony, which was to be consecrated to the Holy Family, and to be called Ville Marie de Montreal. To act as its governor and as the representative of the association, a Christian knight and soldier was selected, Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve.

In the spring of 1641 Maisonneuve and a small group of strong and courageous men gathered at Rochelle to sail for New France. They were joined by Jeanne Mance, daughter of a merchant of Nogent-le-Roi, then thirty-five years old. Her father had been dead a year, and she was casting about to see by what means she could put into execution her determination, taken long since, to cross over to New France to engage in the work of a pioneer. She had not heard of the new colony of Montreal, but one of Le Jeune's letters had found its way into her hands, and she, like all devout ladies of France, was fired with ambition to minister in some way to these New World barbarians.

With Mlle. Mance sailed a maidservant and the wives of two of the sailors.

After a tedious voyage across the Atlantic, the new company arrived at Quebec in August, 1641. The lateness of the season caused them to abandon

the hope of reaching Montreal that year, and they were obliged to spend the winter at Quebec. They proved to be both unexpected and unwelcome guests to the Quebec colony.

They were given shelter for the winter by M. Puyseau at Sillery, and we read of Mlle. Mance plodding to town, nearly four miles away, to visit Mme. de la Peltrie at the Ursuline Convent, which by this time was established on its present site.

On the 17th of May, 1642, a pinnace, a flat-bottomed boat, moved by sails, and two rowboats, approached Montreal. All on board raised in unison a hymn of praise. Montmagny, the Governor, was at the head to deliver the Island, on behalf of the Company of the Hundred Associates, to Maisonneuve, representative of the Association of Montreal. Here, too, were M. Puyseau and Father Vimont, the Superior of the Missions, for the Jesuits had been prudently invited to accept the spiritual charge of the young colony.

Mme. de la Peltrie, who hoped to establish a branch of the Ursulines in Ville Marie, was also a member of the party.

Maisonneuve sprang ashore and fell on his knees. His followers imitated his example, and all joined their voices in enthusiastic songs of thanksgiving. Tents, baggage, arms and stores were landed, and an altar raised.

Now all the company gathered before the shrine. They kneeled in reverent silence as the Host was raised aloft, and when the rite was over the priest turned and addressed them. Then they pitched their tents, lighted their bivouac fires, stationed their guards, and lay down to rest. Such was the birthnight of Montreal.

In the morning they fell to their work, Maisonneuve hewing down the first tree, and labored with such good-will that their tents were soon enclosed with a strong palisade, and their altar covered by a provisional chapel, built in the Huron mode, of bark. Soon afterwards their canvas habitations were supplanted by solid structures of wood, and the feeble germ of a future city began to take root.

Mme. de la Peltrie, finding no scope for her project, returned to Quebec.

Some time elapsed before the Iroquois discovered Ville Marie, but at length ten fugitive Algonquins, chased by a party of them, made for the friendly settlement as a safe asylum. From that time forth the colonists had no peace. No more excursions for fishing and hunting; no more strolls in the woods and meadows. The men went armed to their work, and returned at the sound of a bell, marching in a compact body, prepared for an attack.

In August, 1643, d'Allebout arrived, bringing news of an "unknown benefactress," who had given 42,000 livres for the building of a hospital (Mme. Bullion).

It was true that a hospital was not needed; no one was sick at the Ville Marie, but the colony had been established in order that a hospital might be built.

The hospital, therefore, was built on St. Paul street, surrounded by a palisade, and part of the garrison detailed to defend it. It was sixty feet long and twenty-four feet wide, with a kitchen, a chamber for Mlle. Mance, others for the servants, and two large apartments for the patients. It was amply provided with furniture, linen, medicines, and all necessaries. It had also two oxen, three cows and twenty sheep. A small oratory of stone was built adjoining it. The enclosure was four arpents in extent.

There, on October 8th, 1644, Mlle. Mance took up her abode, and awaited patients. And soon there was no lack of them, for blood and blows and scalps were rife at Montreal. The woods were full of Iroquois; and when not caring for wounded Frenchmen, she was kept busy by the wives and children, who went to the hospital for refuge while the men fought the savages.

At Ville Marie it was usually dangerous to pass beyond the ditch of the fort or palisade of the hospital. Sometimes a solitary warrior would lie concealed for days, without sleep and almost without food, behind a log in the

forest or in a dense thicket, watching like a lynx for some rash straggler. Sometimes parties of a hundred or more made ambushes nearby, and sent a few of their number to lure out the soldiers by a petty attack and a flight. The danger was diminished when the colonists received from France a number of dogs, which were trained to recognize the Iroquois and give the alarm. Then the nuns rang the belfry, to call the inhabitants together.

The little colony of Ville Marie was not very prosperous at first. By 1648 there were forty houses and two hundred and fifty persons. Maisonneuve and Mlle. Mance constituted its sole vitality. When funds and interest flagged, it was Mlle. Mance who went to France to stir up the zeal of the company. There, in 1647, we shall leave her for the present.

By 1648 the Jesuits had pushed their way as far as Sault Ste Marie, and established a mission for the Hurons. There they built a hospital, to which Indian women as well as men were admitted. There is no mention of nuns as nurses. The hospital was destroyed, within a year, by the Iroquois, who burnt the mission station.

During this time several of the Quebec nuns had died, and others from France had augmented their numbers. After five years at Sillery, the constant Indian attacks forced them to abandon the site, and take shelter within the city, while they put up a building on their own land. Workmen were scarce, and then, as now, not too expeditious. So the nuns themselves, aided by two lay brothers, dug the foundations, and carried water to mix clay. Help, in the shape of workmen, finally came from France.

In 1646 both monastery and chapel were built. The nuns were at last under their own roof, on the site they have occupied ever since, and they resumed their white habit—never to give it up again. In this year the Hotel Dieu gave relief to forty-six French and one hundred and twenty Indians.

Soon this building was too small. In 1658 a larger one was opened, and the following year the Hospitalières extended hospitality, on his arrival from France, to Mgr. de Laval, who in 1674 became the first Bishop of Quebec.

Throughout 1660 Quebec was besieged by the Iroquois. Both Hospitalières and Ursulines were obliged to take shelter at night in the College of the Jesuits.

The year 1665 saw the arrival of the first regular troops in Canada—the Carignan Regiment. With them came ship fever. The Hotel Dieu received over one hundred sick soldiers in one day. Huguenots were numerous among these troops. To see them die without professing the true faith was one of the greatest trials of the Sisters.

By 1690 the population of Quebec numbered 1,400 persons, and "there was a sufficiency of doctors, notaries and architects."

On the 10th of October, in this year, the community was rudely disturbed. A fleet under Phipps was anchored in the harbor. Frontenac was recalled from Montreal. His presence quieted the panic, but the bombs of the invaders rattled in the city. Twenty-six shells were picked up in the hospital courtyard in one day. Soldiers came from all over the colony. They took up the floors of the hospital to build city fortifications. The well-known response of Frontenac to Phipps' messenger finally saved the situation: "Go tell your master I will answer him from the mouth of my cannon." The execution of this threat carried the day. The fleet sailed away on October 21st.

We left Mlle. Mance, in 1647, in France. She visited Dauversière at La Flèche, where he had inaugurated the Sisterhood of St. Joseph, and where the first nuns had, in 1644, taken their vows. She saw also the "unknown benefactress," Mme. Bullion, and obtained from her financial aid. Then she returned to cheer the sinking hearts of the colony.

Maisonneuve went to France in 1654, and returned with funds and one hundred workmen. This year the Montreal Hotel Dieu was rebuilt.

In 1657 Mlle. Mance fell on the ice and broke her arm, which was set by the surgeon Bouchard with such poor result that it remained useless until the

following year, when she again went to France, and was miraculously healed by touching the casket containing the heart of M. Olier.

The return voyage was made on the St. André, which had served two years as a hospital ship. With Mlle. Mance were three priests (Sulpiciens), and as a result of the scheme devised fifteen years before by Olier and Dauversière during their walk in the woods at Meudon, six members of the Order of St. Joseph, from La Flèche, accompanied Mlle. Mance. Three were to start a school, and three were hospital nuns, one of whom was skilled in pharmacy.

The St André was infected with ship fever; many of the company had died on the voyage, and were buried at sea. When the vessel reached Quebec, Laval saw no necessity for a new order of nuns in Canada, and detained them. After much bickering, they obtained permission to proceed to Montreal, the journey occupying fifteen days. In the meantime, they had infected Quebec with typhus.

At Montreal the nuns were received in a room over the hospital, twenty-five feet square, containing a closet for stores and clothing. The room was made with planks. After a storm the snow was removed with shovels, and their coarse brown bread froze on the table before them.

Up to the time of the arrival of these Sisters, Mlle. Mance, with three servants, had taken entire charge of the hospital. She now gave over the care of the sick to the Sisters, remaining herself directress of the institution.

For years they suffered greatly from poverty and hardships. The money given by Mme. Bullion had been entrusted to de la Dauversière for investment. He proved unfaithful to his trust, and the community was reduced to extreme want.

Poverty and sickness were not the only trials of the heroic sisterhood. In 1661 the Iroquois became so troublesome at Montreal that the inmates of the Hotel Dieu had to take shelter in the fort.

Approaching the shore, where the city of Montreal now stands, one would have seen, about 1670, a row of small, compact dwellings extending along a narrow street, parallel to the river, and then, as now, called St. Paul street. On a hill at the right stood the windmill of the Seigneur, built of stone, and pierced with loopholes to serve, in time of need, as a place of defence. On the left, in an angle formed by the junction of a rivulet with the St. Lawrence, was a square bastioned fort of stone. Here lived the military governor appointed by the Seminary, and commanding a few soldiers of the regiment of Carignan. In front, on the line of the street, were the enclosure and buildings of the Seminary, and, nearly adjoining them, those of the Hotel Dieu, or hospital, both provided for defence in case of an Indian attack. In the hospital enclosure was a small church opening on the street. In the absence of any other, it served the whole settlement.

And so the Hotel Dieu played no inconsiderable part in the development of the colony. Jeanne Mance died in 1673, having bequeathed her heart to the chapel. She seems to have been a woman of "sound sense, excellent judgment and wise sympathy." Her name is revered to-day in the house she founded, and her good deeds are recorded in the history of New France.

In Montreal another institution was established in the year 1688 by the Superior of the Sulpiciens. It was called the General Hospital, and was built on St. Normand street, where is now the Customs House. It was in charge of an order of lay brothers. For a time prosperity reigned, but fifty years after its foundation it was in a state of ruin.

In 1701 was born a young Canadian woman, afterwards known as Mme. d'Youville, who was destined to repair the fortunes of this fallen house. She began by visiting the poor and mending clothes for the General Hospital, with three other ladies as helpers. After this we hear the General Hospital spoken of as the Hospital of the Grey Nuns.

Mme. d'Youville met with great opposition, but finally received Episcopal sanction and rule, establishing a new order of nuns in 1745. They adopted a grey and black habit.

Mme. d'Youville died at the age of seventy-one. The order of nuns founded by her has spread throughout America. They are usually called Sisters of Charity or Grey Nuns.

It was stated previously that the Recollets in Quebec in 1621 had built their convent on the banks of the St. Charles. This property was purchased in 1692 by Mgr. St. Vallier, who in 1688 had become the second Bishop of Quebec, and it was given to some nuns from the Quebec Hotel Dieu to found what was called the General Hospital of Quebec. It was described as the finest building in all Canada. Here, in 1713, St. Vallier took up his abode, and here he died.

In 1717 a building was erected for the insane in connection with the Quebec General Hospital. This is the first mention we find of any special care for the insane in Canada. In 1743 a new and larger hospital building was erected, and throughout the dangers and epidemics of the country the doors of the General Hospital were ever open.

In the years 1776 and 1777 nine hundred died in this hospital of ship fever.

At Three Rivers, in 1697, the good Bishop St. Vallier, out of his own personal property, founded in perpetuity the Hotel Dieu, with six beds, for indigent poor, and gave it into the care of the Ursulines. This hospital also shared in the epidemics and misfortunes of the country.

Port Royal (now Annapolis) was founded by Champlain in 1604, and in 1629 became the earliest garrison in Acadia. From the earliest days of the settlement there was a hospital outside the fort, called St. Jean de Dieu. Haliburton states that in 1744 it was the most imposing building in Annapolis. It has long since disappeared.

Originally the territory known as Canada consisted of the provinces now called Quebec and Ontario. Acadia consisted of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, with some adjacent land, and the rest of the country was known as the Northwest.

Some fifty years before Canada was finally ceded to the British, Acadia had been conquered by Nicholson (1710) and formally transferred to the British Crown in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, when Cape Breton was restored to the French. Subsequent to Utrecht the French built a fort at Louisburg, C.B.

The original plan of the fort included a hospital to be attended by nuns like the hospitals at Quebec and Montreal; but in 1716 five Brothers of the Charity of St. Jean de Dieu came out from France and endeavored to establish a hospital at Dauphin (now St. Annes), but soon removed to Louisburg. The Brothers filled the offices of superior, surgeon, dispenser, nurse and chaplain, respectively.

After the final occupation of the British the old hospital continued for a while, but the oldest inhabitant to-day in Cape Breton remembers it only by name.

These several institutions comprised the hospital world of Canada during the French régime. The annals of all them are replete with accounts of conflagrations, epidemics and sieges. The Hotel Dieu at Quebec was twice burned, the last time in 1755, when nearly all the original documents were destroyed. The Montreal Hotel Dieu was destroyed by fire in 1695, 1721 and in 1734. The General Hospital of the Grey Nuns in Montreal was burned in 1745 and 1765, and the Hotel Dieu at Three Rivers in 1806.

Scurvy and smallpox were prevalent in the early days of the colony. There seem to have been distinct exacerbations of the smallpox in 1703, 1732, 1733 and 1755. Typhus came with almost every ship. Especially violent outbreaks took place in 1658, 1665, 1685, 1756 and 1758.

A plague called the "Disease of Siam" made its appearance in 1711, 1718 and 1740. It is supposed by some to have been bubonic plague, others believe it to have been an infectious form of meningitis. The deaths from this cause were many. In short, every condition caused by filth, poverty and hardship was with them in those early days, and many times the colony was nearly wiped out.

During the first fifty years there seems to have been a scarcity of doctors, particularly at Montreal, though in Quebec from the beginning the colony was never without medical men. Two among the many are particularly worthy of mention—Dr. Gauthier, who discovered the merits of the winter-green plant, which to-day bears his name, "Gaultheria Procumbens," and Dr. Michel Sarrazin, who was noted as a surgeon, and whose special study of animals and plants is even to-day regarded as authoritative.

On the 30th of July, 1759 we find at Quebec the entire community of the Hotel Dieu and Ursuline Convents, with the exception of seven nuns, were installed with beds and provisions inside the walls of the General Hospital.

An interesting story is told in this connection: "One of Wolfe's officers was wounded in a skirmish preliminary to the Battle of the Plains. He was picked up by a French soldier and taken to the General Hospital. Two days later the French sent an officer with a flag of truce to the British lines, requesting that the effects of the British officer be sent to him at the hospital. At the same time Indians gave an account of his rescue and condition. Wolfe was much moved and sent £20 to the French soldier, by whose kindness his captain had been saved. Two days later another flag of truce came from the town, the bearer of which returned the money to Wolfe, as the Marquis de Vaudreuil declined to accept money on behalf of his soldiers who simply carried out the orders given to them. Wolfe took advantage of the opportunity to address a letter to Mme. de Ramezy, directress of the General Hospital, thanking her for the attention paid to the wounded officer and assuring her that if fortune favored his arms he would extend his protection to her and to the community. And this promise was faithfully carried out, when three weeks later the British entered Quebec." (Dr. Doughty in "The Cradle of New France.")

In the Battle of the Plains on the 13th of September, 1759, Wolfe died victorious, and Montcalm received a mortal wound. Shortly before his death he penned a letter to Townshend, surrendering Quebec and asking shelter for his sick and wounded.

General Murray was in charge within the walls, and he extended to the Hospitalières the courtesy promised by Wolfe, as well as rations and other necessities.

After the capitulation was signed a procession of black-robed nuns, slowly and with bowed heads, wended their way from the General Hospital through St. Roch's and up Palace Hill.

The city was barely recognizable; everywhere cannon ball and fire had left their traces. Dwellings were unroofed, walls felled, roads obstructed by fallen masonry, and pavements were covered with broken glass which cracked under their feet and reflected the glowing sun. British soldiers guarded the gates of the city, the ramparts and public places.

The inhabitants, an unhappy throng, sad and silent, with disheveled clothing, wandered among the burnt and plundered houses. Through this the Sisters passed to find their convents destitute, plundered, used as garrisons by the British. Their farms also were laid waste and their cattle gone.

The wounded were received in the hospitals and convents; the churches were full. Temporary buildings were erected on the Island of Orleans. For a whole year the Ursulines kept sick soldiers inside their convent walls and cared for them.

Scurvy broke out and the Hospitalières nursed the sick and wounded, patched their own torn bedding, made clothes for the soldiers, knit stockings for the Highlanders and converted the dying, all at the same time.

From Three Rivers Sisters came to help in Quebec. At Montreal they were busy caring for the wounded and for those who had scurvy.

Soon after the conquest the Americans, unable to involve Canada in insurrection, resolved to conquer her. Two armies were directed, one upon Montreal, via Lake Champlain, the other upon Quebec. This, the fifth siege of Quebec, began early in December, 1775. Lord Dorchester was then Governor. To add to this distress of the people smallpox broke out amongst the inhabitants and soldiers. Again the services of the nuns were taxed to the utmost.

The nuns took refuge in a vault of their monastery. In spite of the death of Montgomery the siege continued until spring, when the Americans retired before the superior forces of the British.

For a period of twenty-five years the British troops were garrisoned within the walls of the Hotel Dieu. It was not till 1784, when the British fortifications and barracks were in readiness for the military, that the much tried nuns were left in possession of their own monastery.

Three Rivers also played an important role in 1775. American soldiers afflicted with scurvy were received into the Hotel Dieu—so many that they filled the chapel. To this day may be seen in the convent American bills issued to the nuns, which after the war were not redeemed by the United States. The history of the Hotel Dieu proudly states that during this episode, a company of Irish soldiers lined up before the convent and cheered the Ursulines.

In 1776 the Americans, under Wooster, had possession of Montreal and were marching to Three Rivers. Wooster fled to Sorel, leaving four officers at the Hotel Dieu.

On the 8th of June, one and half miles from town, a battle between seven thousand English and two thousand Americans was fought which lasted two hours. The wounded of both armies were brought into the Hotel Dieu. England had enlisted the services of a Brunswick regiment. Their commander, Riedesel, passed the winter of 1776 in Three Rivers, and the Hotel Dieu was used as a military hospital.

During the war of 1812 this hospital again figures in receiving the wounded and sick.

Of these pioneer hospitals the two in Quebec remain to this day on their original site. The archives of the Hotel Dieu are among the most valuable records of the country. The chapel contains some rare masterpieces and relics.

At Three Rivers the Sisters of Providence opened a new hospital in 1864, and it was found best to have only one in the city, the historic Hotel Dieu of the Ursulines was closed. In Montreal the neighborhood of the Hotel Dieu became so thickly built that it was necessary to remove to a new locality. In 1859 the present extensive premises on Pine Avenue were erected. In 1861 the bodies of the deceased Sisters were removed from the old chapel to the present site.

The Grey Nuns, in 1871, removed their convent from St. Normand street to Guy street.

With the 18th century passed the heroic age of the Canadian nursing orders. The era of peace and civilization, if less romantic and picturesque, has brought for them at least less perilous times.





