

monopoly of the fur trade. He would carve a passage from Quebec to the Mississippi. He would build forts at strategic points, and let future generations link them.

And so, in 1678 we find him at Kingston (Frontenac), Canada. He must find a way of portage over this Niagara Falls he has heard so much about, and build forts to protect the unloading and loading of his furs when they come through. Kingston will be his base that will furnish men and provisions to keep the lane of merchandise open to Lake Erie and the west. The reports of the missionaries were discouraging; but the priests had nothing to back them. He would show these Indians the cross, too; but in the rear of the cross the sword would be ever clanking.

In the next forty-three years the French from Frontenac make two efforts to grasp and to hold open this lane of commerce. They succeed in grasping, but not in holding. In the forty-fourth year (1721), on their third effort, they succeed in grasping and holding for thirty-eight years, and then relinquish it forever.

The first effort was made when La Salle sent the Franciscan Father Hennepin and his party across the Lake to find a place above the Falls where they would build their boat, the "Griffon." On December 6th the party entered the mouth of the Niagara River; and on the next day canoed to Queenston—or what afterwards became Queenston. (While John Lynch, studying for the priesthood in Paris would be reading the account, a citizen of Lewiston might be pointing out to a stranger "Hennepin Rock." At the present day the truncated rock forms a foundation for the bridge, but in the explorer's day it towered above the waters). The party scaled the heights and began their journey over the snow, skirting the Canadian side of the awesome Gorge, past the present site of Niagara University, to a point opposite the Falls. No doubt, they sang as the majestic beauty burst upon them, and no doubt too, the Indians trailed them and listened to their sacred song, as they had stopped their fishing and listened to

the "Te Deum" when on the 6th the sails of the palefaces' boat had passed them on the river. The sight was a subject for song. To the excited mind of the priest, the water seemed tumbling from six hundred feet, and its thunder could be heard fifteen miles away: "the universe does not hold its parallel!" They journeyed on to the present Chippewa Creek, and agreed that the boat was to be built on the other side of the river. When they had come back to the Falls, they constructed a rude hut to shield themselves from the wind, and on the 11th nailed a crucifix to a tree, and the priest said his first Mass in the region, Lieutenant La Motte serving.

*"Red men stood there on the snow-clad sod  
 With the dark-eyed soldiers of sunny France.  
 And the vested priest of the living God  
 Lifts the Sacred Host to their rev'rent glance;  
 And naught broke the hush but the river's flow,  
 That wintry morning—long ago!"*

On the 15th they retrace their steps to their boat, cross the river, and find a haven for their craft in the ravine that at the present day is bridged by the trolley tracks of the Gorge Route. There they build a bark chapel. A persistent but unverified tradition has it that they called the little chapel, "Our Lady of the Angels." Father Hennepin in the book he afterwards wrote said nothing of the name. If the tradition were current in the tales of the region when John Lynch was studying in Paris, does that account for the naming his future seminary "Our Lady of Angels?" But whatever the explorers called their chapel, they certainly wished in their negotiations with the Indians to have the help of "Our Lady" and of all the angels; for they realized that to build their boat they must have the Redmen's good will. To gain their good will the priest invited them to sacred services on January 1st. In a sermon at Mass he told them that the white man's visit was peaceful: he but wished to build a boat above the Falls and sail to the Great River. The Indians replied that such a

grave matter must be subject to the Council of the Chiefs of the Five Nations—a five days' journey over the snow to near the present site of Oneonta.

So the priest and the Lieutenant again adjusted their snow shoes, and with their guides padded their way to the Sachems. La Motte must have been rather a swashbuckling buccaneer who preferred using the sword as the most cutting argument in all diplomatic parleys, and who suspected the intentions of anyone who might differ with himself. At any rate, he was surprised to find at the Iroquois council the two Jesuits Raffeix and Garnier. For some reason or other, he suspected them. Did he fear that they should tell the braves that the white man wished to get to the Great River, 'twas true; but that he also wished to fortify the route and gain riches at the expense of the Redman? We know not; but we do know that he demanded the expulsion of the Jesuits from the parley. The Franciscan priest avers that in expiation of the insult he, also, left. The upshot of all the negotiations was that the white man might build a blacksmith shop, but no fort, near the haven of his boat, and carry his irons and wood to a point above the Falls, assemble his ship and sail away.

On the 20th of the month, La Salle arrived, and the busy work began. We can gain some idea of the number of men employed from the fact that in about seven months the work was done; and white men waved and Redmen watched Father Hennepin and La Salle with his party sail away, their "Vexilla Regis" coming fainter and fainter in the evening breeze. When the Commandant De Nonville, Father Melithon and the boat builders returned to their blacksmith's shop they found it in ruins: it had taken the proportions of a stockade, resembled too much a fort. The Indians requested the white men to leave; but Father Watteaux began his parish, no matter what the invitations were to leave. On one pretense or another the diminished party hung on till the next year, when they departed for Frontenac; but not before

they had reconnoitered the ground and had seen that the only plan was to return with a larger force, build a real fort at the entrance of the river where there was a promontory that beetled high above the Lake, as lonely and as strong as the heights of Elsinore. Once ensconced there, they thought they would be impregnable. Anyway, they had accomplished their present purpose—the “Griffon” had departed.

Six years afterwards (1687) De Nonville makes his second attempt to fortify Niagara, but this time at the new location—at the junction of the river and the Lake. He prepares for it by a strategy more worthy of a pagan than a Christian. Perhaps he justifies his conscience by the fact that he has now to match his strength and wit against the English nation as well as against the Five Nations of the Indians, and by the fact that the English have now at Manhattan a strategist who, though he were a Catholic, seemed never to allow his faith to interfere with his ambitions. The English strategist was the Irishman, Thomas Dongan, who had formerly in the old world fought under the French flag, and now in the new was to fight against it. For five years now he had been military Governor of New York. He had fixed the modern boundaries of the state; had decreed religious liberty for all denominations, and had formulated a charter that the English Parliament subsequently repudiated for New York, but still later adopted for Canada; had established a college in Manhattan under three English Jesuits, and had endowed it with lands that later passed into the hands of the Trinity Church Corporation; and most of all, had whipped, cajoled and bribed the Indians of the Five Nations to fight under the colors of England, and had demanded that they send away forever the French Jesuits, making them a promise that he would send them English ones—a promise that he knew he could not fulfill. All the Indians obeyed his last command except the Onondagas. He promised the Redmen that he would help them keep the French from fortifying the Niagara frontier; and had even exacted a promise from De Nonville not to

attempt to fortify it. An era of peace seemed dawning. It was then that the Frenchman matched his wits against the Irishman.

The Frenchman in July invited the neighboring Iroquois to a love feast at Frontenac. Some hundred and twenty accepted, ninety of them being women and children. They found themselves prisoners. Next day, a party of Iroquois fishermen of the St. Lawrence accepted the invitation; and they soon found themselves with the others packed on a ship and sent to France as galley slaves. Then with a hundred soldiers he swept through the Seneca towns in an orgy of destruction, and came to Niagara and in October fortified the heights whereon stands the present stronghold; and, telling De Troyes to hold the Fort till his return, sailed away. The Irishman demanded that the fort be demolished, or he would unleash all the red dogs of war against them. And the red dogs came barking and biting and pawing off French scalps. The Frenchmen were besieged by river, land and lake. Reinforcements could not reach them, but what did reach them were winter and wolves, and starvation and scurvy.

Father Lamberville stayed through the winter, a dying chaplain ministering to his Regiment of Death. Lieutenant De Tregay, a soldier of fortune who had fought in many lands, and sworn he had never seen so fair a spot as Niagara, and yet, withal, that it was "an accursed spot," kept a diary during those months. In it he speaks of the building of the bake house; and that "in the square in the midst of the buildings we digged a well." Both house and well can be seen still today. On Christmas Eve the lonely soldiers tried to lighten their hearts with brandy, and on the snow-swept heights to sing the songs of sunny France. But their voices choked, and they hung on to the hearth like broken-spirited children and wept—wept not because they were drunk, but because they were weakened with the plague. There was not a charge of powder in the Fort, nor any food fit to eat. There was no wood for the fire; and what little blood remained in their

veins was freezing. A few plague stricken men tried to grasp axes, and shambled out beyond the walls to chop a tree. A silence fell. They did not return. In the cabins the sick lay as still as death. In the morning some of the sick staggered from their cots to the port holes, and saw just outside the gates the choppers' bodies in the drifts, and wolves tugging at the faces, ribs and legs; and not one of the watchers was strong enough to chase the beasts away from the dead.

The Lieutenant heads his narrative with grim irony, "The Year of Starvation, 1687." And from cabin to cabin, and cot to cot the priest drags himself to absolve and anoint the dying. The Commandant De Troyes turns on his cot to De Tregay, and curses: "'Sblood! Is this what soldiers of France must come to for the glory of—of—Oh well! I suppose that is what soldiers must come to!—How many dead today, De Tregay?" And thus from day to day until one day he murmured his sweetheart's name, and died. De Tregay writes, "I was too weak even to grieve." In February of the hundred soldiers of three months previous sixty had died; and, says the narrator, there were left "forty skeletons." Twenty more died in March. If the Indians now should come they would be given twenty scalps without a struggle. And one morning some red faces peered into the cabins, and the sick men did not care—did not care until they learned that these men were not the Senecas, but the Miamis, friends of the French. Possibly, these were escaped prisoners from Onondaga, and recognized the Black Robe Lamberville who had often befriended them there. The Miamis found but twelve men living: soon there would be but eleven—the Black Robe was dying. But the latter did not die. So the Miamis took him and one other, and bidding the ten to carry on for a few days, pushed off for Frontenac. Says the soldier of fortune: "the priest's recovery gave us great joy!"

And the ten waited. If the Senecas knew that ten skeletons manned a fort it would be vain to hope for help. The officer dragged his cot to a spot where he could catch a clear view

north; and on a sweet, calm April day while the morning sun flattered the inland sea with a warm caress, he spied a sail! He sank back upon the cot exhausted, and whispered to his comrade, "We have won! We have held the Fort till relief has come!" 'Tis Good Friday. Too weak to rise, he rests on his cot in the cabin, and listens to Father Millet's voice blessing the great cross that rises above the graves of more than four score comrades. A priest has gone; but a priest has come. And this one says, "Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini!"

"Aye," sighs the soldier, "our help is in the name of the Lord!"

"Regnat, Vincit, Imperat Christus!" continues the priest, as he attaches the emblem of the Sacred Heart to the cross.

And the soldier saved from death as he prays for the dead, repeats, "Yes, 'Christ rules—conquers—commands!'" This was two and a half years before the death of St. Margaret Mary in the convent of Paray, France; and this, we think (as Father Bray of Lockport notes) is the first trace of devotion to the Sacred Heart in North America. Two hundred and thirty-seven years afterwards, Pius XI commands that on the last Sunday of October every year the whole world celebrate the feast of Christ the King, and renew its dedication to the Sacred Heart. But the sick soldier on the cot on that Good Friday thought nothing of the nun of the Sacred Heart, nor of the feast that centuries hence would make the world bow its head in adoration; but he did know that Christ rules, conquers, commands. And he did know that when Father Millet two months afterwards was lured away from the Fort on a pretended sick call and captured by the Onondagas and brought to Oneida, the King of Kings still ruled; and that when "we sailed away on September 15th, 1689, at sunset, above the blackness and the desolation, the great cross gleamed like blood," the King still commanded. But it all seemed like another failure of France.

Then there settled upon the region a period of comparative peace. Shortly after the evacuation both De Nonville and

Dongan lost their commissions: the former because of his failure, and the latter because of his success. It was all right for the latter to be charming, honest, humorous, prudent, tactful, courageous and foreseeing; but he was successful, and it was manifestly unwise to allow a Catholic's brow to be garlanded with success. Did he not open the first chapel of Popery in Manhattan? Was he not trying to establish the Jesuits at Saratoga? So a few months after the French had left Niagara, he left the army; and in the following year, while he was living privately at Staten Island, he had to evacuate his home, and run for his life: religious persecutions were swinging the sword. Eleven years afterwards (1700) on August 9, the "saints" of Manhattan repealed his law of religious toleration, and decreed life imprisonment for the priest, and death if he should escape from his prison and be recaptured. A sixty years' period of anti-Catholic propaganda set in. In that period two-thirds of all the books and pamphlets in the Colonies were on religious topics, and half of them were on the Colonial dissatisfaction with the manner England was treating the Catholic question. In another twenty-five years the propaganda was reaping its reward. When, fifteen years after England had taken Canada, it allowed freedom of worship to the Canadians, Alexander Hamilton might cry "They may as well establish Popery in New York and the other Colonies as in Canada. They had no more right to do it there than here . . . Your lives, your property, your religion are all at stake!" But the Canadian reaction to the propaganda was in effect this anachronistic reply: "Turn off the loud speaker! Get another station! We won't tune in with them in their Hymn of Hate against our racial enemies!"

But the tumult is hardly heard within the Niagara region. The Iroquois find it to their advantage to allow the caravans of trade to pass unmolested along Portage Road. To them it meant wads of money and oodles of whiskey. But no fort might be built. They would even allow other tribes to find asylum here. In 1713, the Tuscarora braves, wearied with the



fights with the whites of North Carolina, came hither and have remained to this day. Five years afterwards the road along the river was called a "fine highway." Three years later still, even a priest, Father Charlevoix, camped at Lewiston, and went to see the Falls. And two years after his visit, not only pelts, but lead and silver from the Madison County mines of Missouri passed along the route. The confidence of the Iroquois seemed restored: the franc was mightier than the sword.

Then France made its third attempt to fortify the place. It began cautiously. In 1721 the French merchant, Joncaire, who had married a squaw, opened a store at Lewiston. Soon he had the French colors flying above the shop, and the Indians thought them beautiful. Five years more, and the Iroquois allowed him to build a "stone house" on the site of the old Fort—sort of a storage house. Thus began the "castle" that can be seen today. Other "houses" followed. The "houses" were built to protect the goods. Then walls were built to protect the "houses." Then soldiers came to protect the walls. And the Indians gazed awestruck upon a real, live fortress that, like Topsy, had simply "grewed." And, worst of all, two hundred Indians of the Six Nations could be daily seen staggering single file along Portage Road under burdens of metal and hides from the Falls to the Fort. Inside, a hundred and fifty soldiers welcomed the warriors, and kindly directed them to the holds of the ships that soon would sail for Quebec and France. England gnashed its teeth, swore, protested, pleaded, and orated effusively on patriotism: What did these Redmen mean in selling their land for a franc or a bottle? But, strange to say, it was only the white man that "saw red:" the Redman saw but white tinted with all the other various hues of the rainbow. He was having the most glorious time of his life! England sent its army in 1757, but could not dislodge the one hundred and fifty soldiers; and did not think it profitable to destroy any of the other eleven little forts that dotted the river between the Lakes. But two years

later, Sir William Johnson came with another army, lay siege to the Fort, and took it; and as the French sailed away forever in that July afternoon, he saw that the French chaplain, Father Virot, lay dead upon the field. And in the following September, when Wolfe had taken Quebec, the tattered flag of France fluttered on the new world no more. For eighty-three years, with some intermissions, it had been floating over the Niagara, and it had guarded the Mass and the altar; but the last altar fell when withered the fleur-de-lis. True, the altar rose again, thirty-five years afterwards when Father Edmund Burke just happened to be the chaplain of the English forces at the Fort; but its stay was only for two years, and even during that period it was a thing more tolerated than welcomed—a superstitious trumpery of popery. Except for this brief intermission, all along the eastern bank of the river for the thirty-six miles between the Lakes, an altar would be unknown for almost a hundred years.