

A Victim of Frontenac

ABBÉ FRANÇOIS LASCARIS D'URFÉ

Sulpician (1641-1701)



by

ABBÉ ARMAND YON

Ph.D., Litt.D.

Translated from the French by A. O. GROVEN

A victim of Frontenac

Abbé François-Saturnin Lascaris d'Urfé
Sulpician (1641-1701)
by Abbé Armand Yon, Ph.D., Litt.D
Translated from the French by A. O. Groven

FOREWORD

This pamphlet telling the story of Abbé François-Saturnin Lascaris d'Urfé, after whom our town is named, is the translation from the French of a speech given in Toronto on September 25, 1945, by Abbé Armand Yon, Ph.D., Litt.D. The speech was delivered at the 12th annual meeting of La Société Canadienne d'Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique, and the text was published in the 1944-45 report of the Society. Abbé Yon's paper was based on years of research, including the reading of original letters of the Superior of St. Sulpice in Paris to d'Urfé and other Sulpician missionaries in Montreal and vicinity in the early days of New France. We of Baie d'Urfé are particularly indebted to Abbé Yon for the preparation of this authentic and comprehensive study of Abbé d'Urfé -- "this curious historical figure". The material has been translated, printed and distributed that all may better know the man whose name the Town of Baie d'Urfé perpetuates.

T.R. Lee

Mayor

Town of Baie d'Urfé

November 20, 1959

A victim of Frontenac

THE ABBE FRANCOIS LASCARIS D'URFE

A Sulpician (1641 - 1701)

If you follow the old road along the lakeshore from Montreal to St. Anne de Bellevue, you come upon a beautiful bay just a few miles on this side of St. Anne, on Lake St. Louis: this bay and the area which surrounds it are called "Baie d'Urfé".

To a Frenchman it might seem that Quebec, loyal to the memory of France and the days of Louis XIII, thus wished to honor the author of "L'Astrée"; for most Canadians however the origin of this name might well remain unknown.

To English-speaking people it is a strange name, which they pronounce "d'Urf" or "d'Urfy", as M. Faillon already mentioned, about the year 1860, in his "History of the French colony". Some might even wish to see it replaced by something less forbidding; and, unless we take heed, Baie d'Urfé could well have a fate similar to that on one of Montreal's ancient streets - "Quiblier Street" - which, as Msgr. Maurault explained to us some time ago, was changed to "Tupper Street" just to suit the English tongue!

The name of Baie d'Urfé should remain, for it is the name of a priest, a Sulpician who, after having been a missionary at Kenté, and later at Gentilly, became what was in all likelihood the first parish priest of St. Anne - an odd personality and a man of fighting perseverance as we shall see from the way he and his cousin Fénelon stood up against Frontenac.

I thought that this man deserved to be better known. I wish to outline first the main events of his life, then to expand somewhat on the grievances which he held against the most fiery Governor French Canada ever had.

Sources.- In an enterprise such as this, intended for such a learned gathering, it may be useful to indicate first my main sources of information.

For his paternal and maternal ancestors, I consulted the genealogical dictionaries of famous families, and first and foremost that of MORERI; while the "Gallia Christiana" gave me information on the benefices which were assigned to him in France. Furthermore, I am indebted to M. BERTRAND, for his "Bibliothèque sulpicienne" which gave me details on the life of M. d'Urfé in the Society of St. Sulpice.

I should also mention Henri LORIN's remarkable thesis on Frontenac, not forgetting that as far as the missionary work and the trials of our Sulpician

are concerned, I followed closely the best authority on the subject. I refer to M. FAILLON, who completes the last volume of his "History of the Colony"... with the story of the bitter fight which the Governor waged against Fénelon and his companions.

As far as the conflict is concerned, M. Faillon had at his disposal a most important document: the text of the Memoir addressed, and most likely delivered in person, by d'Urfé to Colbert, in which he complains about Frontenac's arbitrary measures. While the original document has never been found, there is an authentic text still in existence, i.e. the text which is contained in the Register where Bretonvilliers and Tronson, two Superiors of St. Sulpice, kept a record of all correspondence.

The letters which the latter addressed to the Sulpicians in Canada were also very valuable in the study of the many journeys of our missionary, his ideals, his thoughts, his rewards as well as his trials.

I - A BRIEF LIFE HISTORY

Ancestry and early life: 1641-1668.- François Saturnin Lascaris d'Urfé belonged to a noble family from Forez, which Moreri traces back as far as Arnold Lascaris in 1256. By his great-grandmother, Renée de Savoie Lascaris, he is related to the famous Lascaris of Greece, who at one time reigned over Constantinople.

His father, Charles Emanuel, Marquis d'Urfé et de Baugé, Comte de Sommerive et de St. Just, Seigneur de la Bastie, was marshal of the King's armies and bailiff of Forez - which does not mean that he was rich: for example, the Fénelons, his cousins, were very poor and lived as thriftily as the peasants in their neighbourhood. M. d'Urfé was married on April 24th, 1633, to Marguerite d'Allègre, daughter of Christophe d'Allègre and of Louis de Flageac.

They had nine children, among which two girls who became nuns and three sons who became priests: François became a Sulpician, another entered the Congregation of the Oratory, but the one who attained the highest distinction of the three was undoubtedly Louis, the oldest, who although he was a godson of Louis XIV and educated as a "child of honor" at the King's court, wished to be ordained, became Bishop of Limoges in 1677 and, strangely enough, settled in his diocese where he died peacefully in the odour of sanctity on July 1st, 1685.

François, who was to become a missionary to Canada, was born at the Château de Baugé (or Bâgé), in the County of Bresse, in the year 1641; at least that is the year which is given in LeJeune's dictionary, and which appears the most likely.

His early education remains a mystery. All we know of his youth is that on the 1st day of April 1660 he joined the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris. The exact date of his ordination is also unknown, but probably lies somewhere about 1665 or 1666.

His first missions: 1668-1674, then again 1675-1678. - In accordance with his own wishes, our young Sulpician was soon to be sent to Canada. In the Autumn of 1668 he landed at Quebec after a difficult crossing which had caused him great discomfort. As he had to remain in bed a good deal of the time, he congratulated himself on having taken with him from Paris a servant who proved to be of great assistance.

In 1668, New France was thriving under the double leadership instituted by Colbert of a Governor, M. de Courcelles, and an Intendant, M. Jean Talon. The colonists looked to the future with confidence, as the ferocious Iroquois had made their peace.-... The Indians seemed to have become more humane: through their chief Roniario, a group of Goyogouins who had settled on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, where the hunting was excellent, had even asked for "Black Robes".

It is precisely to this Kenté mission that M. d'Urfé was first assigned. To familiarize himself with his new surroundings, he could call upon his own cousin, M. l'Abbé François de Salignac Fénelon who had arrived there the year before. Being of the same age, both Sulpicians must have read with the same eagerness, while they were still at the Seminary, these Jesuit Relations which contained such idyllic descriptions of conversions performed in the wilderness and which their Superiors would so often comment upon in their preachings. To become missionaries to Canada, that was their common ideal. And now it seemed that they would accomplish their ambition together!

In the Autumn of 1669, M. de Fénelon left Kenté to meet his cousin in Montreal. He accompanied him up the river, remembering in the smallest detail his trip of the preceding year, when he and his colleague, Claude Trouve, had boarded a canoe at Lachine on October 2nd, accompanied by two Indian guides. That first trip had not been an easy one: they had to struggle against the currents and resort to numerous portages to avoid the many rapids. The crossing at Long Sault had taken them four days.

At last the vast expanse of Lake Ontario had appeared before them like an inland sea. Having received half a moose from the Goyogouins for food they penetrated the winding bay of Kenté. The headquarters of the mission were located on the other side of a narrow strip of land in the innermost section of the bay, now called Weller Bay, at Consecon, formerly known as Kenté. They had arrived on October 28th, after 26 days of travelling. The country was covered with pines and oaks, according to M. Fénelon who wrote: "This land is not only fertile, it teems with elks, deer, bears, beavers". A hunter's paradise!

Were M. d'Urfé and his companions going to be greeted with a feast, as on that previous occasion, of which the main dish would be a stew of pumpkin and lard? Maybe; the only thing we know for certain is that, as soon as his cousin had reached his destination, M. de Fénelon left to spend the winter at Gandatseteiagorn - our present Port Hope.

Strange as it may seem, this happened invariably: these two cousins were like two nails, the one would always dislodge the other. M. d'Urfe would invariably succeed Fénelon. Having arrived in Canada one year later, he was to replace him at Kenté, then at Gentilly. Thus he would say "By some strange bond We would always work almost together"

But let us return to Kenté. We have news from our missionary thanks to a long letter from M. Trouvé to his Superior, Dollier de Casson, who summarized it in his rather unusual "History of Montreal".

One Winter morning in 1670, having said mass, M. d'Urfé entered the woods, while doing his daily grace. He ventured so far that he lost his way and did not find it until the next day after having spent the night in an abandoned wolf trap which had probably been left by an Indian. The following day the idea occurred to him to pray for the assistance of the founder of St. Sulpice, Jean Jacques Olier, who had died some twelve years before. From then on he walked with greater assurance and found the village without too much difficulty. The Indians were overjoyed and asked him what he had eaten during all this time. "Those ugly mushrooms, said he, which grow under the trees". And, as a hardened missionary, he added that he had found them very tasty "Which, he said, proves that hunger gives taste to the most bitter things".

The following year, travelling to Montreal, his canoe capsized in the middle of the river under a very strong wind; but our missionary, who could not swim, hung on for dear life with such energy and perseverance that he was saved.

Another time he lent his cabin to an Indian woman who was about to have a child. He departed and when he returned he found that the woman had died after having given birth to twins: these were about to be buried with her. He protested against this barbarity, asked to be allowed to baptise the poor victims... One of them died soon after. As for the other, nobody wanted to take care of him. Our missionary succeeded in prolonging his life by giving him "grape juice and a little sugar syrup"; but he soon followed his brother's fate.

Having arrived with all the vocational fervour of early priesthood, M. d'Urfé, like his cousin was soon to be disappointed. It was easy, among these Savages, to baptise the very young, the old or the sick, but it was quite another matter to convince healthy adults: "They listen to the Black Robes, because they do not want to offend them, said Fénelon, but they do not change their licentious ways, which is the essence of conversion".

M. d'Urfé remained at Kenté four years, as he later wrote to Colbert, stating that during this whole period he had not eaten any bread nor drunk anything but water.

When in 1674 Fénelon, accused by the Governor, went to Quebec to present his defence - and what a defence it was! - it seems that his cousin went to replace him at Gentilly - now known as Dorval. There is no doubt that M. d'Urfé

worked at that mission, which had been established under the cannons of Fort La Presentation.-... It had been founded by Fénelon, to whom M. de Frontenac, at the height of their friendship, had even given the three adjacent islands of Courcelles, Ouelle and Dorval, for the purpose of giving instruction to the Indian children.

But this time at least, M. d'Urfé did not stay long. In the Autumn of 1674, he accompanied his cousin to France in order to file a formal complaint against the Governor. As we shall see, Frontenac did not allow him to be accompanied by his servant who had already given him such loyal assistance.

Visits to France, last missions (1675-1678).- Except Faillon, who had access to the archives of St. Sulpice, historians have generally confused this trip with the one he undertook in 1678. In his Memoir, transcribed at the end of the extensive Register of Correspondence, d'Urfé states clearly that his servant had accompanied him "six years before" (it will be remembered that he arrived at Quebec in 1668). Then he adds: "As I had to come back to France, I did not deem it necessary to take another".... From these lines, one can conclude that 1) in the Sulpician returned to his country in 1674; 2) in view of the words "come back" we may safely assume that the Memoir was written in France.

Our missionary must have arrived in France in time to attend the marriage of his first cousin, Marie Marguerite d'Allègre, to the Marquis de Seignelay, Colbert's own son, on February 8th, 1675. This young girl, named after M. d'Urfé's mother, was probably his godchild. Descended from an old family of Auvergne, she was considered at the King's court one of the most eligible girls in France.

How long did the young Sulpician remain in his home country? Tronson's letters which are in our possession and date back to April 1675 make no mention of him neither that year nor the following year. On March 6th, 1677, the Superior writes to d'Urfé in Canada, in reply to three of his letters, which indicates that the latter must have been back in this country since the preceding Autumn, as he must have written before the Winter. On June 1st, 1677, Tronson writes that 800 or 900 pounds will be sent to him by his family. The money leaves on the 14th with a covering letter from the new Bishop of Limoges (Louis d'Urfé), who apologizes for not being able to send more than 900 pounds, and states that even this sum had to be borrowed without the knowledge of his family.

These last words were a premonition of the distressing problem the young priest would have to face in the future, a problem which would eventually jeopardize his career as a missionary. M. d'Urfé loved Canada and his mission among the Indians, but he did not care to live, with his servant, at the expense of the Society of St. Sulpice. He wanted to pay his share. In actual fact, a few years later this was going to be laid down by Tronson as a prerequisite for all his missionaries. The difficulties came from d'Urfé's relatives: they were extremely reluctant to help François, as they considered it was up to the Society to pay for his subsistence.

In the Spring of 1678, Tronson expected him to remain in France for the rest of the year. Two years went by and, in March 1680, the Superior wrote: M. d'Urfé has been considering spending a few more years in Canada, but he seems too weak and in no fit condition to stand the voyage". One month later we learn that our friend has become curate of the parish of St. Sulpice. "He sometimes speaks of his intention to return to Canada, but I do not know what he will decide ...". In May 1681, Tronson tells de Casson: "As for M. d'Urfé, do not think any more of him for Canada, which he likes well enough to talk about, but not to go back to". He states further that our former missionary has been appointed Dean of Notre-Dame Cathedral at Puy-en-Velay - which, by the way, has some of the most beautiful known specimens of romanesque art. And our shrewd Superior continues: "You do not suppose it is to revert to cornmeal!"

Two years later, in 1683, according to the same source, M. d'Urfé "still speaks highly of Canada", but, satisfied with his "daily bread", "it does not seem likely" that he will ever return to America. Furthermore, M. Tronson states that "as things are", he will not send "anyone who does not have the means to pay for his own board and lodging", which amounts to a minimum of 400 pounds.

So it seemed that M. d'Urfé was to stay in France for good.... But Providence had it otherwise. In 1685, Jean Baptiste de la Croix de Chevrieres, Abbé of Saint Vallier, was appointed Bishop of Quebec after Msgr. de Laval's resignation. He quite naturally consulted M. Tronson to learn about Canada, and the Superior assigned to him as advisers the Abbés Trouve and d'Urfé: the latter thus found an opportunity to see again these lands for which he still felt what we would call deep nostalgia.

The following Summer, the prelate started on an extensive tour of his immense diocese. This visit was to take fifteen months, from August 1685 till October 1686. In his first letters to his colleagues in Canada, Tronson had announced that M. d'Urfé was coming back, provided his family allowed him a pension of 1200 pounds. On June 15th, he sent a private letter to La Rochelle to wish his young colleague a happy voyage. It is from this port that the Bishop, the Abbés Trousse and d'Urfé and a small group of young Sulpicians assigned by M. Tronson to assist Msgr. de Saint Vallier, were soon to sail.

For M. d'Urfé, who was decidedly unlucky, the crossing was a painful one. Illness spread on board, and several passengers, including two of the young recruits, had to be buried at sea. On that occasion, Msgr. de Saint Vallier displayed that exaltation and extreme austerity which the wise M. Tronson, in later years, tried to moderate.

On his arrival in Quebec, d'Urfé felt like a fish out of water. Thinking that he might not be able to stay. Tronson wrote in February 1686 that "Quebec is not in his line" and suggested sending him to Montreal and using him at the mission of the Mountain.

However, Msgr. de Saint Vallier seems to have had a sincere affection for him. Only the presense of the Bishop, says M. Tronson, makes life at Quebec

bearable for M. d'Urfé! The prelate, on the other hand, showed his satisfaction and esteem by appointing him, on October 26th, 1685, Canon of the Chapter of Quebec, making it clear that he would rank above the other Canons and immediately below the dignitaries.

On the Bishop's return to France, M. d'Urfé considered settling down in Montreal with his colleagues. Several proposals had been made to him, he says: either to devote himself to preaching (but M. Tronson wondered whether he would be successful) or to go beyond the Great Lakes as "apostolic vicar to the Illinois". The latter plan was entirely in the hands of the Governor, said Tronson.

In his paternal manner, while he thanks his young colleague for having taken care of "the little casket" in which French Sulpicians transferred to Canada their money and private messages, M. Tronson congratulates him for the "good health and hearty appetite" which he has shown since his arrival, but he advises him "not to pursue his own aims too much", although he recognises the need for "outside interests".

Everything was going too well, matters would soon deteriorate, M. d'Urfé had hardly crossed the ocean that his brother, the Bishop of Limoges, and his father, the Marquis, died in France; the former, on July 1st, the latter on November 2nd, 1685. The settlement of the estate was going to be difficult and would probably not turn out to the advantage of our unfortunate Sulpician. Yet, M. Tronson did not think that a visit to France would improve matters.

At this time there was much talk about creating new parishes on the island of Montreal. The idea had been suggested by Msgr. de Saint Vallier. Among the various sites being considered, the "haut de l'île", where St. Anne de Bellevue is now located, appeared suitable for one of these settlements. And so M. d'Urfé became the founder of "St. Louis du Haut de l'Ile", on the lake which is still called "St. Louis".

This is clearly evident from the letters exchanged between the Sulpicians of Montreal and their Superior in Paris. In the Spring of 1687, in reply to four letters which he had received, M. Tronson declared that he approved in principle the proposal submitted by M. d'Urfé to build a clergy house at the "Haut de l'Ile", to make his residence there and to found a parish. However, once more he feared that his family would fail him. He adds that M. d'Urfé, who is usually over-scrupulous, should seek advice from his local Superior, M. Dollier de Casson.

On May 17th, 1687, M. Tronson wrote to his colleague M. Rémy, priest of Lachine. He wanted some clarification regarding the proposed site. He wished to know what distance there was between the extreme tip of the island and various other points which were called Pointe Claire, Pointe du Bouleau and Pointe de Guenette.

On April 23rd, 1688, in another letter, this time addressed to M. de la Colombiere, bursar of the Society, the Superior stated that there would be a great deal of money involved for M. d'Urfé.

In the meantime, plans had been activated. In 1687, by the last mail Mr. d'Urfé asked his Superior to be assisted by a curate; but M. Tronson, in a letter which never reached its addressee replied that it was difficult to find one.

It seems that M. d'Urfé became the first residing priest of St. Louis, although in the many documents relating to Fénelon's trial, it is the latter who is referred to as the priest of the "Haut de l'Ile de Montreal". The chapel had probably been erected a few years before, as there is no mention of it in the estimates submitted by M. Tronson. One thing is certain, and that is that the tendency was to go further and further West to meet the Indians on their way to Montreal to sell their furs. Lachine dates back to 1669, Gentilly or La Presentation to about 1673. From the records preserved in the office of Me Bénigne Basset, it appears that as early as 1678 there were fief's all along the lakeshore from Senneville to Gentilly (Dorval). That of Bellevue, which gave its name to St. Anne, was originally known as "Bout de l'Ile".

According to worthy belief, the chapel of St. Louis was erected on a tip of land which today is called Pointe à Caron and which forms part of Baie d'Urfé. Jean de la Londe was the first church warden there. As to the first parish priest, this is what Msgr. de Saint Vallier wrote in a long letter published under the title: "Present status of the Church in Canada": "M. l'Abbé d'Urfé, who wished to be among those who serve a parish, now conducts one of the most exposed to danger, with much zeal and eagerness".

Exposed to danger? A daring expedition of Denonville in June 1687 had not succeeded in checking the Iroquois. One of them, a convert, told the Governor: "Listen Ononthio, it is like fighting a wasp nest. Crush them if you wish to live in peace. If you simply scare them away they will return against you".

The many incursions of the Iroquois were only a prelude to the big massacre of Lachine (1689). During the Autumn of 1687, the small parish of St. Louis fell a victim to these barbarians and was almost annihilated - it was later to become part of the parish of Lachine. Today one can still see some old stones at Pointe a Caron which may have been the foundations of the chapel.

La Londe was among the victims, and a resident of Baie d'Urfé, Dr. Howard Perie, who died a short time ago, had the excellent idea of honoring the memory of this early settler by a plaque with the following inscription:

**"1687: ERECTED IN MEMORY OF
JEAN DE LA LONDE DIT LESPERANCE,
HE WAS THE FIRST SETTLER ON THIS LAND, AND
WAS A GODLY MAN AND THE FIRST CHURCH WARDEN OF
BAIE D'URFE PARISH CHURCH,
HE WAS KILLED BY THE IROQUOIS A.D. 1687
AND BURIED BY M. L'ABBE D'URFE
IN THE CEMETERY OF THE CHURCH OF BAIE D'URFE
BESIDE THE MARQUIS DE SOURDY
AND THREE OTHER SETTLERS KILLED BY THE IROQUOIS
THE SAME A.D. 1687
R. I. P."**

What became of our priest during these troubled times? He barely escaped the massacre and came back to bury the dead. He displayed great courage as we can see from a letter dated 1689 from M. Tronson to M. Dollier de Casson: "M. d'Urfé, the letter reads, by taking such risks as you have explained, has shown that he has a brave heart, it must indeed have been God's will that he should be sent to serve this isolated post, for he is not so strong by nature".

This last remark would seem to indicate that M. Tronson did not consider d'Urfé as a hardy type. Nevertheless, our priest was not to give up his missions to Canada. However, his private affairs being far from settled, he crossed the Atlantic again, with his Superior's consent, in order to "take some necessary precautions" as otherwise he would have "continuous reasons for distraction and worry".

The final years: 1688-1701.- Having left Canada in the Autumn of 1688, our friend d'Urfé did not witness the terrible massacre of Lachine nor the devastation of the "Haut de l'Ile", so vividly described by the Sulpicians in a report to their Superior General.

On May 20th, 1690, M. Tronson wrote: "M. d'Urfé is being held back, the Deanery of Puy having been assigned to him" in order to make him a resident. It seems that his father the marquis and his brother the bishop were scarcely dead that his other relatives tried their utmost to deprive him of all his possessions. On June 9th of this same year 1690, M. Tronson mentions him for the last time as being torn between these quibblings about his property and the great appeal which Canada still had for him. But there it ends, M. d'Urfé was not to cross the ocean again.

Of his further activities nothing is known until 1694, when he received a new benefice, the abbey of Saramon, in the diocese of Auch. He relinquished it after two months, and on April 3rd, 1695 he accepted in exchange the Benedictine abbey of Uzerche, in the diocese of Limoges. The abbey was valued at about 4000 pounds and conferred on him the title of Seigneur d'Uzerche.

Uzerche, in the Department of Correze, has preserved much of its ancient charm. The abbey church with its tower in pure Limousin style, is one of its most attractive buildings. In the days of M. d'Urfé, it was a small town of 1400 inhabitants, whose well built houses covered with slate tiled roofs rose in tiers from the banks of the winding Vezere. In fact the town looked so rich that one used to say "He who has a house in Uzerche has a castle in Limousin".

The monks however had deviated considerably from the precepts of St. Benoît and were not easy to handle. Being somewhat of an idealist, M. d'Urfé wanted to introduce the sound reforms of St. Maur. He worked at this earnestly and with great perseverance, but had to give up after three years. He retired to his castle of Bâge, about a mile from Mâcon.

This former capital of Bresse used to be part of the Lascaris d'Urfé domain. At the beginning of the XVIIIth century it was still but a village of little more than 600 inhabitants and the castle used to rise on a little hill in the middle of the fertile countryside of this noble residence there remains only the tower which has been extensively rebuilt and the locality is now known as Bâge le Castel.

This is where M. d'Urfé died on June 30th, 1701, having just reached the age of sixty.

He was laid to rest in the burial vault of the Hôtel Dieu, of which he had been a great benefactor. The inscription on his tomb has been transcribed for us in the "Gallia Christiana". It praises his charity, the dignity of his life, but, strangely enough, he is referred to as a "presbyter" and "abbas" without any mention of his ever having been a Sulpician.

II - THE ORDEAL

The Fénelon affair.- M. d'Urfé's experience of Frontenac's highhanded manner represented only a short episode of his busy life, but it was a painful episode for a priest and a man of his standing.

The late Henri Gauthier, who was a Sulpician, has left us a brief description of what he called Frontenac's first manner": "He was not easy to get along with. In fact, he never was in all his life. At the time of his second administraticn he had become wiser and somewhat milder; one could come to an understanding with him. But during his first administration, he wanted to direct, alone and according to his own ideas".

Of all the disputes which arose between the count and the members of the church, the most resounding one was that with Fénelon.

Before we consider how M. d'Urfé became involved, we should first examine briefly the main facts of the case. In 1674, Ville Marie had its own Governor, François Marie Perrot, who owed his high position to the fact that he had married Intendant Jean Talon's niece. Having settled on his domain, the island which still bears his name, Perrot occupied an ideal position to stop the Indians on their way to Montreal and buy their best furs at very low price. He even paid them with liquer against the repeated orders of the government. In 1673, Frontenac played him a trick of his own by establishing an advanced post at Caturaqui (Kingston), which gave him control over the fur trade; thus, the two governors truly hated each other.

Being a friend of Talon and coming from the same part of the country as Frontenac, who selected him as his own personal guide and interpreter among the Indians, Fénelon was on the best of terms with both of them. Alas! This would be his downfall!

Frontenac had been trying for a long time to summon the Governor of Montreal before the Sovereign Council. He sneakingly wrote to Fénelon asking him to persuade his friend to come and defend himself at Quebec. The unsuspecting Abbé interceded and Perrot departed for the capital. On his arrival, the count's men were waiting for him and placed him under arrest.

In vain Fénelon travelled to Quebec and back, on snowshoes, along the frozen St. Lawrence. He received no explanation nor was he given permission to see Perrot; a message which he intended for the latter was intercepted by Frontenac.

M. l'Abbé returned to Montreal roused to indignation as one can easily imagine. It is then that the parish priest suggested that his turn to preach would come at Easter, and Fénelon replied: "Of course! I have prepared my sermon on my return journey from Quebec!".

Easter came on the 25th of March of that year 1674. The dignitaries of the day were assembled in the front row of the Hôtel Dieu Chapel, on St. Paul Street, while the people of Ville Marie were gathered for High Mass; there was LeMoynes, LeBer, Marguerite Bourgeois, Cavalier de La Salle: more than two hundred people in all. After the reading of the Gospel, M. de Fénelon ascended the pulpit, read the text: "Femme pourquoi pleurez-vous?" and began his sermon. Everything went well until he came to the second part of his exhortation when he suddenly turned to speak about the abuses of authority. His audience thought he was referring to the chores which the Governor used to impose on the peasants. There was great surprise and consternation and restlessness in the warden's pew. Arising suddenly, young Cavalier de La Salle, with a sweeping gesture of the hand, called the congregation to witness the words that had just been spoken and left the chapel, slamming the door behind him. He would advise Frontenac, his protector, immediately.

"Your sermon has given me much grievance, said Fr. Perrot, the priest, to Fénelon; I should have given the signal to start the singing of the Credo!" The preacher pretended he had never intended to criticize the higher authority, but he knew well enough that no one believed him. In fact, instead of making amends, he started a petition for his friend Perrot. Then, he cautiously turned over to the Seminary the islands which he possessed on Lake St. Louis, left St. Sulpice and went to live alone at Lachine.

To the Governor's request for the text of the incriminating sermon, he replied: "Why do you not call on the witnesses. If I am innocent, you have nothing to ask of me. If I am guilty, which I vigorously deny, then you should not expect me to contribute to my own undoing."

But life became unbearable for him. By the Governor's orders he was barred from entering any home: food was thrown to him through the window and he had to eat on the doorstep like a dog.

Me d'Urfé enters the scene.- M. d'Urfé, seeing his cousin's predicament, decided to intervene. Up to that time, his dealings with Frontenac had been rather

cordial. He wrote later: "I thought that a heart to heart talk would lead to a better understanding, and soften his attitude". How wrong he was!

Two men, probably Indians, brought him by canoe to Quebec to see the Governor, "pay his respects" and hand him a letter from Fénelon.

It would be interesting to know the contents of the letter which Fénelon had asked him to deliver, just as we would have liked to see the text of the incriminating sermon. The fact remains that, having read the message, Frontenac told d'Urfé coldly that were it not for the fact that he had much regard for him, he would have had him arrested on the spot, including the two men who had brought him to Quebec.

In his Memoir, our Sulpician states that he was very surprised and claimed his innocence, as well as that of his two companions. He returned to Montreal having achieved nothing. In fact, as they landed, his two guides were arrested by order from Quebec.

As one would suspect, matters did not rest there. M. d'Urfé felt he had too many good reasons for complaint and his words must have been heard outside the seminary. He had overlooked the fact that Frontenac had friends in Montreal who would keep him informed of his enemies' doings. In February, the Governor arbitrarily appointed La Naudiere to replace Perrot, as well as a new magistrate, Boisvinet, to deal with matters concerning the fur trade. The Governor's devoted Secretary, Barrois, also paid frequent visits to Montreal.

It is the latter who tried to make trouble for d'Urfé. As he used to stay at a merchant's house he picked up words here and there which the Sulpician was supposed to have said and sent a three-page report to Quebec. M. d'Urfé happened to be with the count when the latter received the document. Unable to contain himself, Frontenac read him a few lines. The priest objected that all this as untrue, but the count refused to reveal any more of the contents. M. d'Urfé then suggested that he bring the report to Montreal in order to clear up the whole matter on his next visit.

The following Summer, Frontenac came to Montreal for the Indian's annual fair. M. d'Urfé hurried to meet him and spoke to him about the accusations. The Governor told him that he had left the document behind and that he no longer wished to talk about it. The Abbé calmly insisted that this incriminating document could not be allowed to come into strange hands. Frontenac replied sharply, stating haughtily that his Secretary knew his business and was as much a man of honor as M. d'Urfé.

Our Sulpician, far from giving in asked to be confronted with the merchant. Whereupon the count became enraged and "with his stick in hand he led me out of the room", declared the priest, "shouting loudly from the top of the stairs that I should not have come to his house to insult him. He treated me so unkindly that the guard later declared that M. de Frontenac had thrown M. l'Abbe d'Urfé out of the house".

An enraged governor brandishing his cane and showing a priest out of his house! This is indeed a spectacle worthy of Molière.

In the weeks which followed matters became worse and worse between Fénelon and Frontenac. Tired of the whole affair, the accused finally decided to go to Quebec, not without having first reiterated his support for Perrot after christening a new-born son of the ex-Governor of Montreal.

Then followed a real duel between our two antagonists from Périgord. Fénelon objected that the Council was not competent to try a member of the clergy, but the Governor claimed that he had committed high treason. One thing is certain: had Msgr. de Laval not been absent, Frontenac would never have dared to attack one of his priests. The Governor paid no attention to representations made by the Vicar-General, M. de Bernieres.

Held prisoner on parole at the brewery, Fénelon was only too happy to charge the bill to the Governor. At his trial he remained seated and kept his head covered. On a remark from the Governor he only pushed his hat a little further down. Then Fénelon began to object to his judges: to Frontenac first who was both party in the case and a judge - and to a few others. All the members of the Council were not friends of Frontenac by any means, and the latter feared that the whole case might turn to his disadvantage. As the Abbé kept appealing to the King, he decided to send him back to France, with Perrot, in order that the King himself might pass judgment on them.

When d'Urfé chose to accompany the accused to France, he once more aroused the Governor's wrath. The latter forbade him to take his loyal servant with him. To make sure no one would ignore his orders he put them down in writing and decided that his servant would no longer be allowed to accompany his master on his missions.

M. d'Urfé felt utterly indignant. Stubborn as always, he made a last attempt to persuade Frontenac, explaining why he considered that he should be accompanied by his servant, mentioning among other things his seasickness. But the Governor replied that once he had taken a decision he was not in the habit of changing his mind. "The fact is that he had publicized his refusal and had told too many people about the situation to turn back."

M. d'Urfé then tried to impress upon the Governor that this would deeply grieve his family. He asked him to reconsider the matter.

The Governor cut short: "Let us not talk about this any longer" and d'Urfé replied that he would appeal to the King's court.

This threat only made matters worse. Frontenac stooped so low as to to a young schoolmaster's tricks for fear of being fooled. He warned the captain of the ship not to try and stow away the servant; on the day of embarkation guards were posted along the ship to make sure the order would be obeyed.

M. d'Urfé was going to denounce these arbitrary measures to bring about the Governor's downfall.

The Memoir.- M. d'Urfé left without his servant but having firmly decided to make a full report as soon as he would arrive in France.

I suspect he must have had as travelling companions on board the ship his Superior, Dollier de Casson, Fenelon and Perrot, and that they must have joined their efforts. One thing is certain and that is that the Memoir received the full approval of the Sulpician authorities, who in fact considered it so good that they had it transcribed in an imposing volume which, luckily for us, was later to escape the persecutions of the French revolution.

The document is entitled: "M. l'Abbé d'Urfe's complaint to Msgr. Colbert about the illtreatment which he suffered at the hands of M. le Comte de Frontenac". After a short preamble, where the author speaks highly of the affection shown by the Minister for Canada, the author complains about the insults and the ill treatment to which he was subjected by the Governor of New France.

Then he goes on to describe the facts of the case, in the order which we know: he was badly treated when he interceded on behalf of his cousin, and the Governor's men had made false reports on him against which he had not been allowed to defend himself. Finally, Frontenac had held back his loyal servant.

All this was of direct concern to our Sulpician. But, having stated his personal grievances, he could not resist telling Colbert what the whole colony was complaining about, i.e. that the Count did not hesitate to intercept and open private correspondence. Moreover that, treating the missionaries like ordinary trappers, he would not allow them to travel without a passport: that a priest at Kenté could not go and give assistance to a dying man in a neighbouring village without first having travelled 300 miles to obtain the governor's consent. And d'Urfé added, exaggerating slightly: "In the meantime the sick die without having received any help, their soul is left to perish, and the people lose faith seeing that they are left without assistance"

A few well worded sentences completed the discourse. Colbert had already shown too much interest for Canada to tolerate the Governor's conduct any longer. M. d'Urfé who signed the paper as the "most undeserving missionary of New France" stated nevertheless that he hoped the Minister would not refuse his support and would not withdraw the favours which he had always bestowed on his family.

Whether the manuscript was handed to Colbert through some influential official or directly by its author, I personally am inclined to think that the latter is more likely. A Sulpician returning from Canada had no difficulty in approaching the Minister; d'Urfé was more than that: following the marriage of his cousin d'Allègre he was now related to Colbert - the latter could hardly refuse a private audience.

Whatever means M. d'Urfé used to make sure his complaint reached its destination, the important fact is that it was heeded and produced results.

It is true that the King, after the trial, jailed Perrot and forbade Fénelon to return to Canada, but he also reprimanded Frontenac in a letter dated April 22nd, 1675. One by one he recalled the grievances mentioned by d'Urfé: the need for a priest to obtain a passport, the opening of private mail, the refusal to allow a Sulpician to be accompanied by his servant. The King then stated clearly: "If one or all of these are true, then you must mend your ways ...". On May 13th, there was another letter, from Colbert this time, stating that the King wished the Governor to temper his attitude a little, and not to punish too severely any offence against the authority of His Majesty's administration or of the Governor himself. Colbert then reminded the Governor that he had much sympathy for M. d'Urfé.

Such clear admonitions would have made almost anyone but Frontenac change his mind. All the more so in view of the fact that Colbert, in order to reduce the authority of the Governor, conceived the idea of giving more power to the Sovereign Council by investing all its members with a royal commission, and by appointing an Intendant as in the days of Courcelles and Jean Talon (LORIN).

However, we know from history that Frontenac far from learning his lesson, became more and more arrogant, quarreled with Msgr. de Laval, Intendant Duchesneau and several Council members - and so he was finally dismissed.

To what extent was our Sulpician responsible for this decision? Lorin, without however substantiating his statement, writes that "the Abbé d'Urfé, who had not forgotten the incidents of 1674, was actively seeking the Governor's return to France".

This remains to be proven. For, on the contrary, it seems that the Governor and the missionary had made their peace after the latter's return to Canada. As a matter of fact, on June 3rd, 1677, M. Tronson, writing to the Governor for a favour, starts his letter as follows: "I am very pleased with the good intentions you saw in M. d'Urfé, which I am sure you will find in our other gentlemen ..."

But the document was still in the files. In 1681, Colbert, old and tired, had passed on to his son, Seignelay, the conduct of the affairs of the colonies. The latter, while still getting acquainted with his new responsibilities, came upon the Memoir and again brought it to light.

Thus that terrible manuscript, which had already been the subject of official dispatches in 1675, was to have serious repercussions eight years later.

III - CONCLUSION

"M. d'Urfé has a good disposition, wrote M. Tronson to the Superior in Montreal, M. Le Fèvre. One of his best traits is his frank nature and the fact that

he cannot have something on his mind and keep it hidden. That is how we have always known him and I do not think that the Canadian climate or his being in contact with Indians could have changed him."

All told, François d'Urfé's life was that of a pious and conscientious priest. It seems that after reading the Jesuit Relations he, like so many others, had formed an exaggerated idea of the Indian missions, and that once he had lost his illusions, he was never quite able to readapt himself to reality, although we must admit that this was partly due to circumstances beyond his control.

And so, it is not only as a missionary that he should be remembered: as his cousin Fénelon is famous in our history for having stood up to Frontenac, so should d'Urfé be for having largely contributed to the fall of this powerful ruler.

Both cousins were of the same age and of illustrious descent. They were about thirty-three at the time of their trials and apparently both had that vigour and petulance which sooner or later had to come into conflict with the fiery spirit of the Count. Being men of gentle birth, one imagines them rather touchy on matters of honor, although this did not preclude the practice of christian virtues, including humility. But, having given sufficient proof of these virtues in the course of their mission, they no doubt considered that they were justified in not giving in to the arbitrary demands of a high official - even if he was the Governor himself.

We will admit that Fénelon went well beyond the limit. However, his cousin, wounded as he was in his dignity, managed, thanks to a firmness of purpose that did not exclude tact and shrewdness, not only to obtain justification for himself but also to bring about the improvement of the most arrogant of His Majesty's colonial governors.

For it is common knowledge that the seven years of forced retreat which Frontenac had to endure were most beneficial to him. When he came back in 1689, his manner was quite different. For ten more years, he gave brilliant proof of his military value and of his administrative ability, so much so that he is now considered as one of the Governors who achieved the most for the glory of France and its colony.

For having contributed, even indirectly, to such a miracle, for having, as the saying goes, "belled the cat" - M. l'Abbé d'Urfé deserves our gratitude and an honorable place in our national history.

Abbé Armand Yon

Ph.D., B.A.
