

Antoine Gaulin (1674-1770) **An Apostle of Early Acadie**

by

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Almost akin to folklore and the shadowy legends of the ancient forest is the story that tells of a flourishing Micmac Christian community that existed over two hundred years ago on the shore of Antigonish Harbor in eastern Nova Scotia. Intriguing, to say the least, is that part of the legend which speaks of a chapel on an island in that harbor, beneath which was a mysterious crypt from which a subterranean passage wound deeply to some hidden spot on the wooded shore. Fancy may evoke the picture of peaceful canoes led by the Christian chimes to that island shrine, or in more troublous days dark-skinned Christians creeping warily to Mass through their hidden catacombs. History itself goes to the extent of relating that the early English settlers who arrived in his vicinity in 1784 noticed the weather-worn ruins of a small chapel not far from Town Point about five miles from the present town of Antigonish. Beneath it was some sort of underground passage in which they found several religious images. Concerning the fate of this native Catholic community history is silent, but, according to a local legend, when the Indians learned that their enemies the English were coming, they made a hasty attempt at destroying their chapel, concealed the bell in the harbor, and rushed the French missionary by canoe up the harbor, along the river, (which was much deeper in those days), until they reached the interior lake country. Thence in the same manner they brought him to the south shore of the province from which, according to the story, he effected his escape. Might not this have been the famous Abbe LeLoutre or the saintly Father Maillard, for this district was well known to both?

The years marking the end of the seventeenth century and the opening of the eighteenth are interesting ones in the history of Acadie. England and France were then engaged at their sporadic territorial squabbles. Wars, honored, in grim humour, by the names of our illustrious sovereigns, raged intermittently. King William's War saw Port Royal pass into English hands in 1690, and the peace of Ryswick in 1697 saw it pass back. During Queen Anne's War Port Royal returned to the English in 1710, and the peace of Utrecht in 1713 consolidated this acquisition along with such additions as Newfoundland and all Acadie – France retaining only Cape Breton, and Isle St. Jean (Prince Edward Island). The war which bears the name of good King George and its corresponding peace of Aix-la-Chapelle coming some

years later need not concern us here. No doubt in comparison with our modern warfare these so-called wars were insignificant affairs, yet they were cruel and bloody enough in their limited scope and were sufficient to prevent progress for many years. In a word, despite temporary lulls our undeveloped country was practically in a state of open or tacit warfare throughout these years.

Passing from things political to those ecclesiastical it must be admitted that a fair supply of fact and detail relative to Church affairs is available. Just prior to the period touched upon in this sketch Msgr. St. Vallier of Quebec had visited Acadie¹ and the picture he leaves us of the Church there in 1686 is a pleasant one indeed. We have noted that Port Royal was captured by the English in 1690, and our next witness speaks in less laudatory terms. In fact Sister Chanson, of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross, writing in 1701 gives us a sorry scene to be contrasted with that of St. Vallier. She says: "Our Church is in frightful poverty, its only covering is straw, the walls are of logs, and instead of glass for the windows we have paper. There is no bell, and the people are called to church by the beating of a drum... There is no crucifix, no pictures, no censer, no vases for wine and water, no finger towels; there is no drawer in which to keep the two or three sets of old vestments, and a couple of much used albs. But what is still more deplorable the Holy Sacrament is kept in a small wooden box, composed of four boards nailed together. This is the Tabernacle in which the God of Heaven and earth resides. The English carried off a suitable Tabernacle that was here, also the sacred vessels and the rest. In a word, everything is wanting."² If such was the state of affairs at Port Royal, an important and central mission, how must things have been in the lesser ones? Yet despite the raids, the pillaging, the general unsettled and dangerous state of the times the spirit of the missionaries of the Church was unbroken, and more than one Catholic priest of those days exulted as a giant in beginning his arduous way. Notable among these brave pioneers of Catholicism was Father Antoine Gaulin, secular priest from the Seminary of Quebec.

Antoine Gaulin, the central figure of this account, was of Canadian birth, being born on the Isle of Orleans, not far from the city of Quebec, April 17th, 1674. At an early age he was sent to the Quebec Seminary where he remained first as a student and later as an ecclesiastic until December 1697 when he was ordained priest. Occupying the episcopal see of Quebec at this time was the able and energetic Bishop St. Vallier, who reposed an especial confidence in his own seminary priests, not only in parochial charges but in missionary work as well. Accordingly after allowing the

¹ St. Vallier was then vicar-general of Bishop Laval whom he succeeded as Bishop of Quebec in 1688.

² Cited in O'Brien, *Memoirs of Bishop Burke*, p. 50.

young priest a few month's experience in local parish work, he sent him to the mission field of old Acadie, a territory embracing not only the present Maritime Provinces of Canada, but also an appreciable portion of the State of Maine. Father Gaulin arrived in Acadie in 1698, and was first stationed at Pentagoet an Indian mission on the Penobscot River, not far from the present Bangor, Maine. The young Father Gaulin did not rush blindly into his new duties but spent some weeks of preparation for his extensive charge with the Jesuit Father Bigot at another Indian mission on the Kennebec River.

Although residing at Pentagoet, it must be remembered that Gaulin's missionary work was by no means confined to this Penobscot settlement alone, for from time to time he was obliged to traverse the primeval forests of Acadie, going even as far as the Island of Cape Breton. Although Abbe Gaulin had for some time an assistant in the person of a young seminary priest, Philippe Rageot, he appears generally as a solitary figure, a lone apostle of the ancient woods.

Antoine Gaulin's life is the story of incessant labor amid unending and all but insurmountable difficulties. The scene of his apostolate was a wooded wilderness, his flock the wandering Micmac savages, and he was exposed on all sides to unjust accusations and calumnies. Under English rule he would be looked upon as a secret agent in the pay of France; under the French regime he would be regarded as favoring the English. The student of history is grateful to Parkman for his sound and sympathetic treatment of many of the French missionaries, yet I feel he is somewhat misleading when he points out that Gaulin received a "gratification" of fifteen hundred *livres* besides an annual allowance of five hundred.³ To the rapid reader it would appear that our missionary was an opulent and over-paid churchman. We must remark in passing that the *livre* was not a pound, but a silver coin worth about nineteen cents. The illusion is further dispelled in the light of certain letters and documents that fortunately have been preserved.⁴

The Seminary of Quebec had at this time in Paris one of its officials the Abbe Tremblay whose duty it was to attend to the temporal needs of the seminary mission priests. Much of the correspondence between Gaulin and Tremblay is useful in forming a fairer view of the financial status of the early Micmac missionary. The purchasing power of money in a sparsely settled colony must have been considerably below par. The historian Casgrain⁵ states that the yearly allowance to each missionary was barely three or four hundred *livres* each year, and that this sum was almost always inadequate to

³ Parkman, *A Half-Century of Conflict*, vol. I, p. 196.

⁴ Much of the valuable Gaulin correspondence may be found in Casgrain, *Les sulpiciens et les prêtres des missions étrangères en Acadie*.

⁵ Casgrain, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

their needs. Consequently we are not surprised to find a letter from Gaulin to Tremblay, (written September 1701), in which he complains of his limited resources. He is not receiving all his allowance, his assistant has received nothing, they have no income, they lack means of sustenance and are obliged at times to live on clams and mussels (*coquillages*). He admits that De Brouillan, governor of Acadie, has been good to him. The latter, on his part, in a memorandum of October 6th, 1701 speaks in praise of M. Gaulin, missionary at Pentagoet. In another letter to Tremblay of November 28th, 1702, Gaulin again describes his difficulties. He speaks of the debts and expenses incurred by two long missionary journeys among the Indians. One mission is almost two hundred leagues from his base at Pentagoet. As he cannot depend upon his salary arriving in time he has been forced to borrow money. Father Maudoux, pastor of Port Royal has lent him sixty *livres*; Sister Chanson has lent him two hundred francs. He asks, strangely enough, not for money but for lard, olive oil, vinegar, wine, soap and gun-powder! Again he begs for smaller breviaries as they are always on the march, and large books are inconvenient to carry. He cannot afford a watch, but is content to use the sun as his time-piece (letter undated). In another letter we see him so discouraged that he fears he will have to forsake his missions: "But after all we are not angels, we must eat, drink, and clothe ourselves. I know, Monsieur, that it is not your fault; but I speak freely to you, that you may have the goodness to present our needs to Monsignor." Referring in 1708 to some money to be apportioned among the clergy Governor DeSubercase has this to say of Gaulin: "Father Gaulin, missionary of the Micmac Indians has been given a hundred *écus*. [This coin was then equivalent to three francs.]... Father Gaulin has more need for three hundred *écus* than the other priests have for one hundred, because he has neither dues (*dime*) nor income and he is subject to considerable expenditure in the frequent journeys he must make to the different parts of his mission. In justice we should establish a fund for him of at least a hundred *pistoles*. [About five hundred dollars.]"⁶

This continual penury of resources Gaulin voices again some years later in his lengthy epistle to Msgr. D'Aguesseau, Chancellor of France, a document to which we shall refer later.⁷) Here he speaks of the expenses incurred by attempting to build a permanent church for his Indians. He had spent almost all his available money in preparing materials and labor for this, but the ever smoldering war had broken out into destructive flame. The English came and took everything. The loss amounted to seven thousand *livres*, and Gaulin was obliged to sell whatever patrimony he had in Quebec.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷ Relation de la Mission du P. Antoine Gaulin dans le pays des Mikmaks. Archives Nationales. K. 1232.

But the trials of our intrepid missionary were not exclusively of such an external character as those mentioned above. Heavier crosses than those he had to bear, and bear them he did. In no idle spirit of adulation does the historian Casgrain compare his life of hazards and privations with that of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "In journeying often, in peril of waters, in peril of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the gentiles, in ' perils in the city, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethern" (2 Cor. XI. 26).⁸

The French missionary frequently found himself in direct opposition to the French traders and to the French civil officials, for occasionally men appeared who were willing and anxious to enrich themselves at the expense of public morality. Apparently of this type was M. De Villieu, once an officer in the French forces, then an agent in the French trading company of Chedabouctou (Guysborough, N.S.). Governor De Villebon died in Acadie July 5th, 1700, and was succeeded by M. De Brouillan, the friend of Gaulin who, however, did not arrive until June 1701. In the meantime it would seem that De Villieu was a sort of military commandant, and did just about as he pleased. This man is said to have tarnished the high repute he had won for himself in the military expeditions against the Yankees by his subsequent greed, and the illicit means he used in his transactions. He soon found that he had Father Gaulin to deal with, as the latter had condemned his dishonest and immoral proceedings, and above all his liquor traffic with the Indians. De Villieu replied by various accusations against the priest but these are carefully refuted in a letter which Gaulin wrote to Tremblay, October 24th, 1701. The Gaulin-Villieu difference went before higher authorities, but the official court despatches declare in favor of the missionary, and indicate the high esteem in which Father Gaulin was held by his superiors both lay and clerical. The Abbe Tremblay proved a stout champion for Gaulin on this occasion, and besides urged that Messrs. Gaulin and Rageot be given a more substantial allowance. In fact in June 1703 he obtained from the Bishop of Quebec the promise of an additional "pension" each year for these missionaries to cover the expenses of their long journeys. However, this allowance was to be a sum not exceeding two hundred *livres*. Incidentally M. De Villieu soon fell upon evil days, and in 1702 we find him at Port Royal, broken in health, apparently forgotten by his influential friends, a disgruntled and disillusioned man.

We now come to a rather obscure and involved topic which must be touched upon even in such a brief survey as this. It appears that there existed at this time a feeling of friction between the Seminary priests engaged at missionary work and the Jesuits similarly employed. By letters patent of May 1698 Bishop St. Vallier deprived the Jesuits of their Illinois mission on the

⁸ Casgrain, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

Mississippi and sent there priests from the Seminary of Foreign Missions. This proceeding was strongly opposed by the Jesuits who did not consent to it until 1701.⁹ Occasional misunderstandings and traits of bitterness are at times evident in the western, the Louisiana, and the Acadian missions. Yet it would be well not to place too much stress on this friction, as there is also evidence that in some instances secular and regular priests worked together in a sympathy and harmony that is truly edifying.¹⁰

Now, the Jesuits were anxious to have the Pentagoet mission where Antoine Gaulin was stationed. In one of his letters he complains of the attitude of the Society in this matter, stating that the Indians are opposed to a change of pastors and that they are desirous of retaining the priests they already have. Furthermore he feels that it would be a shame to forsake a mission which is so well established, and whose natives are so well disposed... Again it should be considered that this mission was not founded by the Jesuits but by the Abbe Thury, a seminary priest sent to that place by Laval in 1687. On the other hand, however, it is evident that the territory originally assigned to Gaulin and his assistant was much too extensive for two men, however great their zeal. A glance at the western section of a map of old Acadie will show that the Jesuits were not unreasonable in their demands. We observe, roughly speaking, three parallel rivers flowing into the ocean from the Abenaki and the Malecite Indian Country. On the most westerly of these, the Kennebec, the Jesuits were well established, on the next the Penobscot was Gaulin's mission, and on the third, the St. John, the Jesuits had, about this time, succeeded the Recollets. Hence in the interests of solidarity it would seem a logical step for the Society to attend to that central mission.

Whoever may have been in the right, by a letter from Tremblay to Bishop St. Vallier of January 20th, 1706 we learn that Gaulin consented to cede his Penobscot mission to the Jesuits. Previous to this, on October 24th, 1704 he had been made vicar-general for all Acadie with added jurisdiction over the French colony of Plaisance, Newfoundland. He spent some months in the latter post in 1705, and says that he was kindly received by M. De Subercase, governor of that section. Having been relieved of the New Brunswick territory, Gaulin flung himself with his accustomed energy into the mission field of what is today Nova Scotia. Unfortunately it is impossible to follow him throughout his numerous voyages and visitations, and we must often be content with slight references to his name in the pages of Acadian history. At times, indeed, he emerges in bold relief only to disappear again into the silent shades of the Micmac forest.

The early years of the eighteenth century were crucial ones for Acadie,

⁹ *The Jesuit Relations* (Thwaite' edition), vol. LXIV, p. 278.

¹⁰ Cf. letter and journal of Jacques Gravier, S.J., in *Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXV.

and the fate of that country swayed dubiously in the balance. In 1706 Governor De Brouillan was succeeded by M. De Subercase, the most brilliant of the French governors of Acadie, and the last. It is said that he might have kept Acadie for the French had he not been practically abandoned by the King and court. Stationed at Port Royal he had in 1707 repulsed a powerful English expedition from Boston. In 1710 after a siege of nineteen days he was forced to surrender his weakened stronghold to the English, but his resistance was so heroic that Colonel Nicholson gave him the most honorable terms of surrender. Port Royal was now named Annapolis Royal in honor of Queen Anne, and Colonel Vetch was left there as governor with a garrison of almost five hundred men. The Acadians in the vicinity of the fort (banlieue), assured of full liberty in the practice of their religion, took an oath of allegiance to England. These are accused of infidelity to that oath, but it must be remembered that in 1711 their pastor Father Justinien Durand was arrested and sent in custody to Boston. By this and other misguided actions Vetch rendered himself very unpopular with the Acadians, while his attempts to conciliate the Indians went for naught. Despite Vetch's assertion that many missionaries were at large in Acadie, Father Gaulin was the only priest at this time, and Indian and Acadian alike looked to him as their champion.¹¹

On one notable occasion the English garrison organized a punitive expedition against some of the Acadians who had not yet made their formal submission, but as the Indians got wind of the plans, a very sanguinary engagement took place about twelve miles from Annapolis. The affair quickly developed into a massacre, and not an Englishman escaped. The results of this ambush are well presented by Beamish Murdock in his *History of Nova Scotia*:

“This action so raised the courage of the French inhabitants and Indians, that they sent to inform the missionary, Gaulin, of it. He was thirty leagues away at the time, laboring in secret to collect a party to surprize the Fort at Annapolis, which he projected to attempt in concert with the sieur de St. Castin, who held the commission of lieutenant under the marquis Vaudreuil.¹² On receipt of this intelligence, Gaulin went at once to Port Royal (Annapolis) with more than two hundred men. Gaulin notified the inhabitants and the Indians to repair to his assistance, and directed them to fit out a vessel to transport provisions for the siege. He also sent off a small vessel to Placentia,¹³ to request ammunition for this enterprize from M. Costabelle, the governor of the place. All the inhabitants withdrew out of cannon shot from the fort, and they also transported their cattle up the river.

¹¹ Casgrain, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

¹² Neither Casgrain in *Les Sulpiciens* nor Savary in *County of Annapolis* mentions this particular phase of the affair.

¹³ The French colony Plaisance in Newfoundland.

Those of the *banlieue* intimated to the governor that he had violated the articles of capitulation, and that they were thereby freed from the oaths they had taken not to bear arms; after which they joined their compatriots in blockading the fort. The investment was such that the garrison could not come out to work or appear on the ramparts. The inhabitants relieved each other weekly by companies, in keeping up the blockade or investment. Gaulin himself proceeded to Placentia to obtain succors of ammunition, etc., and an officer of experience to take command of the siege.”¹⁴

But all was to no avail, and Port Royal was fated to remain an English possession. Although Gaulin reached Newfoundland safely and obtained the required supplies, the vessel bearing them fell into the hands of the English, and he himself escaped capture only by being in another ship. After this he resumed his Micmac mission work and we hear but little of him for a time.

Some of his letters are preserved, written about 1713. In 1714 his name is mentioned on the parish register of Port Royal, and in the same year he was present at a meeting there. In 1715 when the Indians had captured the crew of an English vessel, Father Gaulin made an effort to protect them.¹⁵ This took place on the shore of St. George’s Bay, an arm of water that makes the northern limit of what is now Antigonish County, N.S.

The mention of this particular locality suggests a short inquiry into Father Gaulin’s report to Msgr. D’Agusseau, already referred to. This account must have been written in 1726, as Gaulin states that he had been sent to these missions twenty-eight years ago. Its author goes into details regarding the Micmac Indians, their morals, racial traits, customs, and especially their Christianity. It is a pleasing picture, marred only by the remembrance that their contact with the white man has not always been for the best; disease and drink have wrought havoc among what was once a noble and powerful tribe.

Interesting indeed is the recital of his plans and efforts for locating these wandering aborigines into something like a permanent settlement. It is almost a platitude to say that where the Cross goes, civilization goes with it, yet in Gaulin’s work among the savages the old adage becomes anew a reality. Governor De Subercase (in a letter written December 1708) speaks of Gaulin’s intention of gathering the Micmacs into a permanent village. He had thought about Chedabouctou, but as this was somewhat removed from the best hunting ground, as well as being too exposed to the English, it was necessary to seek another spot. It was then suggested that he settle his natives “on a small river called Sainte Marie which is twenty leagues west of Canso.” Casgrain¹⁶ wonders if this would be Shubenacadie where LeLoutre

¹⁴ Beamish Murdoch, *History of Nova Scotia*, vol. I, pp. 323 ff.

¹⁵ J. S. McLennan, *Louisburg*, p. 36.

¹⁶ Casgrain, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

later had an Indian mission. Yet if “west” could be taken as “north-west” we should have Antigonish, and, in view of the report we are now considering, I believe this would be the safer conjecture. A part of this report reads:

“When they [i.e. the Micmacs] will at last be united in a single village as they wish, they can grow grain and catch fish sufficiently to live comfortably, and for that reason they chose the River of Arthigoniesche to set up a village there. This river crosses a part of Acadie four leagues from the Strait of Canso [passage de Fronsac] which separates Acadie from Cape Breton [Isle Royale]; boats of forty and fifty tonnage can enter there by taking advantage of the tide. The entrance, [i.e. of Antigonish Harbor; to the casual observer it presents the appearance of a large river], is however difficult enough on account of the sand bars; the tide comes up about two leagues, after which the water is fresh, and divides into several branches, and makes eight or ten leagues of land quite suitable for cultivation if cleared... The land is very level and there is not a single stone in it, and it yields all sorts of herbs, which inclines one to believe that grain will grow there perfectly. The little corn that the Indians have been growing there for some time, and peas, beans, cabbages grow there very well. If these poor people, who are not accustomed to clear the land, had some help from the French to cut down the largest trees, and had implements enough to plough the land, in a short time they would be able to make a living throughout the year. This would facilitate their education, and at the same time make it possible for the missionaries to live amongst them without being a charge to anyone.”

He further states that he considered the surest means to make this settlement a permanent one was to build a church there, at which a resident priest could stay. His first attempt at accomplishing this was balked when all his materials of construction fell into the hands of the English; unfortunately the workmen too had been paid in advance! Yet recently he has been able to achieve his ambition, and the little church is now built. (This would date its completion at about 1724.) He states that this little chapel lacks many of the most necessary appurtenances for divine service, yet must answer the spiritual wants of a hundred and twenty families which have already gathered there. The report as a whole is an eloquent plea in behalf of the Micmac Indians of Acadie, and is a lasting memorial to the indefatigable seminary priest who did so much in the interest of religion and civilization.

In 1724 the captious and intolerant Governor Armstrong appeared on the scene, and his unhappy regime ended only with his suicide in 1739. A decree of his council in 1725 declares that, “Gaulin’s insolence to this Government is unpardonable.” Loyal to France as long as this loyalty could be consistent with his higher obligations as a priest of God, Gaulin fought the good fight of a patriot, but when he knew that resistance to England was unavailing he petitioned for pardon and good standing in the face of English authority. The governor and council resolved October 11th, 1726 that on

begging pardon, taking the oath of allegiance, promising not to meddle with government affairs, but confine himself to his religious functions and giving sufficient security for his behavior he might remain as a missionary in the province.¹⁷ Yet additional difficulties were to arise. Gaulin was willing to make whatever promises or apologies the governor demanded but was unable to furnish the required security. Armstrong was acting under pressure as he wanted somehow to placate the Indians and French inhabitants, but he could not refrain from such phrases as: “that old mischievous incendiary Gaulin.” The Council however advised that the priest be placed as curé of Mines until further orders. The following month a certain Mr. Adams made an affidavit declaring: “that old fellow Gaulin spoke slightly of the government and disrespectfully of the order,” and the cantankerous Armstrong described it as “intolerable insolence.” It was all a misunderstanding; Adams had mistaken the priest’s meaning, and Gaulin denied the charges made against him. At any event the Governor and council decided that it would be unsafe procedure either to imprison him or banish him from the province so our old missionary was set at liberty and permitted to continue his work.

Father Gaulin was faithful to the trust he had. No longer did he foster an anti-English sentiment among the natives. As a matter of fact in 1727 he was suspected by the French “of assisting the Indians in making peace with the English, and although he was an old man, broken with years of service as a missionary the report seriously irritated Maurepas.”¹⁸ During the years 1731-1732 his name is signed to the baptismal register of Port Royal. But his ecclesiastical authorities at last recognized that his best efforts had been made in the mission field, and he was recalled to the old Seminaire de Quebec which had sent him forth. The noble patriarch of the Acadian missions at last bade farewell to his faithful flock, and returned to Quebec where he passed to his well earned reward at the Hotel Dieu, March 6th, 1740.

Gaulin’s little mission chapel by the River of Arthigoneishe was in ruins before the end of the century which saw its completion, yet the true structure he had reared was of no such perishable material. Micmac Indian mission work was of the utmost importance in the preservation and development of the Catholic faith in Nova Scotia. Gaulin himself was at best merely tolerated by the English authorities, and Abbe LeLoutre who followed him was a hunted man. The next missionary Father Maillard was latterly paid by the government, as the Indians repeatedly refused to apostatize, and would accept no clergyman but a Catholic priest. Maillard was able likewise to administer the Sacraments to Catholics other than the natives. After his death in 1762 some Protestant ministers unsuccessfully attempted to

¹⁷ Murdock, *op. cit.*, p. 438; Akins, *Nova Scotia Archives*, pp. 68, 69.

¹⁸ McLennan, *op. cit.*, p. 66. Maurepas was the French minister of Marine.

evangelize the Indians. “But a stranger they follow not but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers” (John X – 5). Once more the government bowed to the inevitable and sent for another Catholic missionary. Father Bailly arrived in 1765, and was also on government salary. He again was able to attend, although often surreptitiously, to the spiritual wants of the Irish and French Catholics. Bigotry of course was still rampant, but progress along the lines of religious freedom was rapid, and Catholicism made steady strides. Hence it is evident that Indian mission work paved the way for the subsequent triumph of Catholicism and was doubtless one of the most potent forces which at last, in 1827, brought about Catholic emancipation in Nova Scotia, an event which anticipated by at least two years the Catholic Emancipation Bill in the mother country.¹⁹

FATHER GAULIN’S CHAPEL

Calm are the waves that pulse in George’s Bay,
Tranquil the tides of eastland Acadie,
Silent the little harbours dream away,
And hold another Micmac mystery.
Vain is the quest to find the holy isle,
Though you may tread the wood-enwoven shore
Where Gaulin, victor over war and wile,
Had built his silvan shrine in days of yore.

Two hundred winters’ snow and sleet, and rain
With jealous time’s effacing enmity
Have stolen all from Gaulin’s humble fane,
But what it had of immortality.

Not his the ruins of a wasted land,
No faded legend of the wilderness;
A Cross-crowned multitude our churches stand –
The heritage of everlastingness!

R. V. B.

¹⁹ Cf. *How Nova Scotia Emancipated Catholics* by Sister Francis d’Assisi in *Thought*, December 1933.