

THE FESTIVAL OF JEANNE MANCE.

The following charming account of the Festival of Jeanne Mance appeared in the July issue of *The Canadian Nurse*. Those who attended the Congress of the International Council of Nurses in Montreal in 1929 will remember the beautiful statue in front of the Hôtel Dieu which we here reproduce.

"Every year on the seventeenth day of May, the anniversary of the arrival in Montreal of Jeanne Mance is celebrated in the great hospital, of which she was the Founder. L'Hôtel Dieu de St. Joseph in Montreal is to-day a stately group of buildings enclosing a quadrangle in which stands the heroic statue of the woman who may justly be called the pioneer lay nurse of Canada. The gracious figure, in its sweeping robes and close cap, bends over a wounded soldier with a gesture of infinite pity and tenderness, and here beside it is the natural setting for the commemoration of her memory.

The ceremonies began with the solemn rite of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which took place in the church attached to the hospital. From behind the grille, with exquisite purity and sweetness, came the voices of the Sisters as they sang the responses to the service celebrated before the High Altar. At the conclusion of this moving and impressive act of faith, a procession was formed, headed by the lay nurses of l'Hôtel Dieu wearing immaculate white uniforms, veils and gloves. Down the long aisle they carried the beautiful wreaths of flowers given by various French Canadian organisations and behind them, two by two, came representatives of other French-Canadian nursing groups, each bearing a lighted candle protected by a shade, on one side of which was a heart symbolic of that of Jeanne Mance and, on the other, a simple Cross.

The long line moved slowly along beside the high grey wall of the hospital until it reached the courtyard where the wreaths were deposited at the foot of the statue. Later on a delightful one-act play was presented, written by Mademoiselle Marie-Claire Daveluy, of Montreal. This was entitled 'A Critical Day in the Life of Jeanne Mance,' and was interpreted with dignity, charm and humour by a cast of four persons, three of whom were nurses. The rôle of Jeanne Mance was vividly portrayed by a young lady who, though not herself a nurse, bore such an extraordinary re-

semblance to Jeanne's portrait that the audience was almost startled when she made her entrance. The action of the play described the manner in which Jeanne Mance dealt with certain administrative difficulties which otherwise might have seriously retarded the development of the hospital.

It was all so natural that it might have happened yesterday and to the lay nurses in the audience it gave a new vision of Jeanne Mance—herself a lay woman—striving to do the wise and just thing in difficult circumstances. For one onlooker, at least, the dividing years melted away. Previous to the ceremonies we had 'made rounds' in the hospital with the Reverend Sister Allard, *Hospitalière-en-*

chef, and had seen in the pharmacy the blue and white china jars which Jeanne Mance had brought with her from France. Some of them are still in use and one is used for storing honey used in dispensing. Perhaps Jeanne herself had, in her practical way, handled that very jar—so very gently, we touched it with our finger tips.

On the way home we went, all by ourselves, back to the quadrangle. A full moon, and beside it a great star were slowly climbing up the sky. Against the dark dome of the church the statue gleamed in the moonlight and above it, barely stirring in the soft May wind, drooped the folds of the flag of France, the banner of Jeanne Mance, the first Canadian nurse."



The Statue of Jeanne Mance at the Hôtel Dieu, Montreal.

Under the auspices of the section of Historical Medicine of the Canadian Medical Association an Exhibition of one hundred objects chosen from the archives and historical treasures of the Hotel Dieu of Montreal, was arranged in that city, on the occasion of the Sixtieth Convention of the Canadian Medical Association, and of the

Congress of the International Council of Nurses in 1929. Historical notes then presented recorded that the original Hotel Dieu having become uninhabitable reconstruction was decided upon. In November, 1694, the Sisters occupied their new hospital, but, alas, it was destroyed by fire in the following year. Among other precious relics that perished was the heart of Jeanne Mance, deposited in a pewter box near the sanctuary lamp.

Exhibits of exceptional interest were a facsimile of the last will and testament of Jeanne Mance, who died in 1673, the original of which is in the archives of the City of Montreal, and the Memoirs of Sister Morin, the first Canadian recruit to the Order of the Nursing Sisters of St. Joseph.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)