

1633. the laborers appointed to cultivate this transplanted vineyard, so sweetened the crosses of the most painful mission ever perhaps established in the New World, that what they wrote to their brethren in France created among them a real eagerness to go and share their labors.

Character
of the early
mission-
aries.

The annual Relations which we have of these happy times, and the constant tradition preserved in the country, both attest that there was an indescribable unction attached to this Indian mission, which made it preferred to many others infinitely more brilliant and even more fruitful. This doubtless arose from the fact, that nature finding nothing there, either to afford the comforts of life or to flatter vanity—the ordinary shoal of brilliant success, even in the holiest ministry—Grace worked without an obstacle. Moreover, the Lord, who never allows himself to be overcome in generosity, communicated himself unreservedly to men who sacrificed themselves without reserve; who, dead to all, entirely detached from themselves and the world, possessed their souls in unalterable peace, and were perfectly established in that spiritual childhood which Jesus Christ has recommended to his disciples as their most distinctive characteristic.

This is the portrait, to the life, of the first missionaries of New France, drawn by those who knew them closely, and the sequel of this history will convince those least prepossessed in their favor that it is not too highly colored. I knew some of them in my youth, and found them as I have just depicted—bent beneath the labors of a long apostleship, and in bodies wasted by hardship and broken with age, preserving still all the vigor of the apostolic spirit. I have deemed it a duty to render them here the same justice as was universally rendered by the country.

Among the number of idolatrous nations which opened to the missionaries so vast a field for the exercise of their

Québec) appeals to the parish registers, which, from 1621 to 1690, show only two cases of illegitimate birth. See Boucher, *Hist. Verit.*, p. 155.