

The Church in Canada.

Under this heading will be collected and preserved all obtainable data bearing upon the history and growth of the Church in Canada. Contributions are invited from those having in their possession any material that might properly come for publication in this department

THE GREY NUNS IN CANADA.

[Note.—For the following sketch of the Grey Nuns, the first religious order of women founded by a Canadian, we are indebted to the *North West Review*. It is from an address delivered by the venerable Archbishop of St. Boniface, on occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Sister St. Joseph, one of the founders of the Order in the North-West. Ed.]

Deus sanctus in omnibus operibus suis.—Ps. 67.

II.

Mgr. de Pontbriant, Bishop of Quebec, having visited the General Hospital in 1755, ratified by his signature and thereby sanctioned by his authority the three pages on which had been written, ten years before, the nature of the engagements made by Madame Youville and her associates; it is from that date that the laws, ecclesiastical and civil, recognized the Grey Nuns as a religious community, the proprietors and directors of the General Hospital of Montreal.

The conquest of Canada by England caused uneasiness, but the tact and generosity of Madame Youville and her companions led them to find friends and protectors in those whose authority naturally they had feared.

The Grey Nuns were looked upon as approvingly by the English as they had been by the French.

A cruel trial was laid upon the new community at the end of the year 1771. Madame Youville had completed her seventieth year; her labours, her sufferings had aided the action of the years; all, as her merits, had gone to form the crown which awaited her in heaven.

The 23rd December, 1771, she fell asleep in the Lord, after thirty-four years from her religious profession; leaving to mourn her loss all the unfortunates on whom she had lavished her care, all the City of Montreal, who knew and admired her works—and the eighteen Grey Nuns whom she left behind.

We have seen that the founding of the Grey Nuns was surrounded with many difficulties; this is the mark of the works of God. Circumstances have marked its development by a gradual growth of which the happy result has been to give to it the greatest stability. The death of Madame Youville did not weaken what had been done; it was God's work; and thus, we are permitted to see with consolation, even after the death of its founder, the new institution gradually develop during the rest of the first century of its existence.

Experience naturally suggested modifications; the rules were completed; some of the works undertaken by Madame Youville were abandoned; others were modified; changes were effected even among the Sisters, always, however, in the same spirit, with the same end in view, under the same authority, the changes were not inspired by caprice but were called for by necessity; so that the general physiognomy of the institution remained perfectly the same. The Grey Nuns are the daughters of Madame Youville, inheritors of her virtues, rich in the examples which she scattered before them; strong in the protection which she accorded them; and it is then that this community, loved, respected and admired by all, saw, after a century of existence, the dawn of the year 1838.

"God is holy in all his works."

During the course of the one hundred years which we have just examined seventy-seven persons had become Grey Nuns, having made their religious profession in the community, forty-seven had left the earth for a better world, so that at the commencement of 1838 the community counted only thirty members besides three others in the noviciate.

(2)—FIFTY YEARS IN RELIGION

The 1st of June of the same year, 1838, Miss Gertrude Coutlee, having terminated her noviciate, was professed under the name of Sister St. Joseph and became the thirty-

first Grey Nun then living. It is this event, which occurred fifty years ago, the memory of which, and its consequences, have brought us together to-day in this sacred place. It seems to me quite natural to say a word to you of what has been done in the institution of the Grey Nuns during these fifty years.

In reviewing the memories of my youth, I recall a day in the autumn of 1838; my college companions and myself were surprised to see that stones and other material were being carried quite near to the court-yard, where we took our recreation. Curiosity was not slow to enquire what edifice was going to be built there and who was going to live there. We were told that the worthy parish priest of St. Hyacinthe intended to open an asylum for the unfortunates of the parish, that he was going to construct a building which was to be called "The *Hotel-Dieu*," and that the Grey Nuns of Montreal would have charge of the work there, which would be similar to that which was accomplished at Ville Marie. Finally in the month of May, 1840, four Grey Nuns, accompanied by a venerable Sulpician priest, entered the *Hotel-Dieu* of St. Hyacinthe. That was a happy day for the rising town, and a great holiday engraved the memory of the *fete* in the minds of the collegians. This fact was of great import for the town of St. Hyacinthe, but its beneficent action was not to be limited to that locality; it inaugurated, as it were, a new era for the community of the Grey Nuns themselves. As I said, a moment ago:—In the month of June, 1838, this institution counted only 31 members and the house in Montreal, which up to this time had been the only one, contained no more than twenty-eight professed nuns, after having generously given four to St. Hyacinthe. This generosity imparted to the institution an entirely new impulse, causing its acceptance of the idea of founding establishments beyond the mother house and drawing down upon it the blessings that have followed it.

This idea of new foundations did not remain sterile. Hence, in the month of April, 1844, four other sisters bid farewell to their sisters in religion as well as to their relations, and set out for the Red River. In the month of February, 1845, four carried their zeal to Bytown, now Ottawa, the capitol of the Dominion of Canada, and in the month of August, 1849, five other Sisters of Charity entered the old town of Champlain. Later, the Sisters of the Red River arranged a complete reunion with the Mother-House at Montreal, whose Superior became their Superior; so that to-day, we can fix at three the number of the principal branches which have gone out from the trunk of the magnificent tree planted by Madame Youville. This tree, enriched by these three principal branches and those which it continues to produce, forms the most numerous community and, I make bold to say the most fruitful in good works, that our religious country possesses.

The following table will aid in making clear this opinion.

(a) The Mother-House and foundation, which is at Montreal, comprising with it the vicariate which it has given to St. Boniface, and the 34 other establishments which are subject to the Venerable Mother *Filiatrault*, Superior-General, counts 406 professed nuns, 58 novices, 16 postulants, 700 aged persons, 1,052 orphans, and 3,579 children instructed in schools or refuges. Six dioceses benefit by these works.

(b) The branch at St. Hyacinthe, with its offshoot at Nicolet, counts 12 establishments, 165 professed nuns, 22 novices, 14 postulants, 405 aged persons, 301 orphans and 1,364 children in schools; and work in five dioceses.

(c) The Grey Nuns of Ottawa have 30 establishments, 278 professed nuns, 42 novices, 18 postulants, 200 aged persons, 205 orphans, 7,906 children in their schools, and work in eight dioceses.

(d) The Sisters of Charity of Quebec, comprising also Rimouski, possesses 24 establishments, 231 professed nuns, 18 novices, 40 postulants, 179 aged persons, 982 orphans, 4,035 children, and work in five dioceses.

Let us bring together this rich harvest of establishments and persons, and we have the admirable result following:—The daughters of Madame Youville, the Grey Nuns,