

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 SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IN TORONTO.

(An address read before the Society.)

I.

You have often been told that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was commenced in Paris in the year 1833—you are more or less familiar with the causes to which it owes its origin, but you may not have heard when it was first brought to Canada, and under what circumstances it was first introduced into this city. As the Society is likely to become a permanent institution in Toronto, a few recollections, chiefly personal, tending to illustrate its early local history, may not be uninteresting.

A young physician, Dr. Joseph Painchaud, who had made his studies in Paris and while there had become a member of the Society, was the first to establish a Conference in the city of Quebec. The 19th of July (Feast of St. Vincent de Paul) was, in the year 1846, a gala day in that city. An elaborate programme informs us that Grand Mass was chanted at eight o'clock, in the Cathedral; that the music was both vocal and instrumental; that blessed bread was distributed, and that a collection for the poor was taken up by six of the principal citizens of Quebec. In the evening, at seven o'clock, a general meeting of the members was held in the chapel of the *Congreganistes*. Eight other Conferences were founded immediately afterward in the same city, and five in the city of Montreal.

During the sojourn here of the General Government, in the year 1850, I was accosted one day by a gentleman of benevolent aspect, who asked me to call at his lodgings upon particular business. Anticipating nothing of importance, and not knowing that my friendly interlocutor had been commissioned by his confreres of Quebec to establish in Toronto a branch of a society of which, up to that time, I had never heard, I attended. I listened to his persuasive arguments, unlike Cæsar, I went, I heard, and I was conquered. Here is the final result of our interview, as recorded in the Minute Book.—

"At a meeting, held in the sacristy of St. Joseph's Chapel, in the Cathedral of St. Michael, at 7 o'clock, p.m., 25th Sunday after Pentecost, being the 10th day of November, 1850, for the purpose of forming a Conference of Charity, to be united to the Society of St. Vincent of Paul, were present:—George Manly Muir, Thomas Hayes, Charles Robertson, Denis Kelly Feehan, Samuel Goodenough Lynn, William John Macdonell.

"Mr. Muir read the opening prayers of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The following motions were then made and carried:—

"1st. Mr. Muir moved, seconded by Mr. Macdonell—That a Conference of Charity be formed in this city under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Vincent of Paul, and that it be called "The Conference of Charity of our Lady of Toronto."

"2nd. Mr. Muir moved, seconded by Mr. Robertson—That the following persons do unite themselves into and form the said Conference, namely:—Mr. Thomas Hayes, Mr. Charles Robertson, Mr. Samuel Goodenough Lynn, Mr. John Elmsley, Mr. Wm. John Macdonell, Mr. Denis Kelly Feehan, and Mr. George Manly Muir.

"3rd. Mr. Feehan moved, seconded by Mr. Lynn—That Mr. G. M. Muir, who is a member of the Council of Canada of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, be the President of this Conference.

"4th. The following persons, being nominated by the President, signified their acceptance of the following offices:—Vice-President, Thomas Hayes, Secretary, William John Macdonell, Treasurer, Charles Robertson, Assistant Secretary, Denis Kelly Feehan; Assistant Treasurer, Samuel Goodenough Lynn.

"Mr. President, in the absence of Mr. John Elmsley, notified the latter's acceptance of the office of Keeper of the Vestibule.

"5th. Mr. Hayes moved, seconded by Mr. Feehan—That

this Conference adopt for its guidance the rules and regulations of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul at Quebec.

"6th. Mr. Hayes moved, seconded by Mr. Feehan—That the Conference is desirous of participating in the indulgences and other spiritual blessings granted by the Church to the Society of St. Vincent of Paul.

"7th. Mr. Hayes moved, seconded by Mr. Feehan—That Mr. President be authorized to communicate the foregoing resolutions to the Council of Canada of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul, and to solicit our admission into its ranks under the denomination of "The Conference of Charity of our Lady of Toronto."

Thus was founded the Conference of "Our Lady of Toronto"; it was aggregated to the Society on the 6th January, 1851. The resolutions just read, though moved by various persons, were drawn by Mr. Muir; they are models of their kind, and, as such, deserve to be copied by any Conference seeking connection with the Society. The original members were, it will be seen, seven in number; this gave occasion to the Rev. Mr. Tellier, a Jesuit Father then residing here, jokingly to liken them to the seven deadly sins. Of these pioneers, one only remains in Toronto; Mr. Muir was for many years President of the Superior Council of Canada, at Quebec; the others have long since crossed "the bourne whence no traveller returns."

The removal of the Government to Quebec, in 1851, led to the resignation of the Presidency by Mr. Muir, on the 31st August. On the 14th of September following, in the sacristy attached to the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Cathedral, Mr. Macdonell was elected his successor, by 11 votes out of 16. The retirement of Mr. Muir was by no means acceptable to the new President, who apprehended, as its consequence, the utter collapse of the Society. From causes easily understood at the time, but now difficult to explain, the Conference was obliged to lead a wandering life:—the meetings were held sometimes in what was then known as Stanley Street Schoolhouse (now the St. Nicholas Home), sometimes in one sacristy, sometimes in the other, sometimes in the gallery of the Cathedral, sometimes in its crypt, but most generally in its north-western porch, at the issue of High Mass. Perseverance, blessed by Divine Providence, gradually overcame this and other drawbacks, and on the 23rd January, 1853, it became necessary to found a Conference at the eastern end of the city, attached to the church of St. Paul; on the same day, Mr. Feehan was elected President of the new Conference, which was aggregated on the 19th December following. Mr. Feehan did not long retain the Presidency; he was succeeded in June, 1854, by the late Mr. Wm. Paterson, who retired in January, 1860, in favour of Mr. J. G. Moylan, on the resignation of the latter, Mr. Paterson was re-appointed and retained office till the nomination in September, 1868, of Mr. J. J. Mallon, the present incumbent.

In accordance with the usual practice of the Society, the formation of a second Conference gave occasion to the organization of a Particular Council, to unite the existing Conferences, and to provide for further extension. The election of a President for the Council was conducted in strict conformity with the rule prescribed for such a proceeding; it was held in the private chapel of St. Michael's Palace, on the 26th February, 1854, on which day Mr. Macdonell was chosen by the united Conferences by a vote of 13 out of 24.

Mr. Macdonell retained the Presidency of the Conference of Our Lady till the 13th June following, when the position was taken by the late Mr. John Wallis, who held it till his death in 1859, when he was succeeded by Mr. Robertson, on whose resignation, in 1863, Mr. Macdonell resumed the office, but was soon afterward relieved by Mr. Patrick Hughes, who but a year or two ago resigned and was succeeded by Mr. Patrick Curran, who is still in charge.

The erection of St. Mary's Church, Bathurst street, gave rise to a Conference in the western part of the city; it was organized 28th October, 1854, and aggregated, under the title of St. Patrick, on the 13th June, 1859. There being already one Conference in the city under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, it was thought that a second under a similar title might cause confusion: but when St. Patrick's Church, Dummer street, was built, everybody admitted the propriety of designating the Conference of the new parish by the name of its patron; the authorities at Paris were consulted, and with their