

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

BISHOP GILLIS.

• CAREER OF AN EMINENT CANADIAN.

II.

IN order to form some conception, however inadequate, of the difficulties that beset the great work to which Father Gillis had consecrated his life, it may not be out of place here to glance rapidly at the condition of the Church in Scotland at that time. The so-called Reformation had done its work so thoroughly that a foreigner entering Scotland for purposes not directly concerning the Church, might have supposed the Faith to be extinct. Despoiled of all her fairest possessions by the ruthless hands of a powerful, but unscrupulous and heretical State, the Church had been for more than three centuries obliged to hide herself in the caves and dens of the earth. It is safe to say that in no country had the "Reformation" been more destructive or far-reaching in its effects. It swept the country from end to end, carrying death to the spiritual life of the people to the remotest corners of her fair domain, with a savage completeness that can find a parallel only in the neighbouring country of England. The land of St. Ninian, St. Pella-dius and St. Columba, of St. Aidan, St. Cuthbert and St. Margaret was henceforth to be the prey of the detestable heresy of Calvin until it shall please God to bestow again the priceless gift of faith upon a people "who would not have [Him] to roign over them." But in the hearts of a remnant of the people in the Isles and Highlands the Faith had taken too deep root to be thus easily cast forth at the bidding of yicked men, and although from that day until within a few years ago the people in many districts had been deprived of the ministrations of a priest, the Faith has, in spite of all obstacles, been kept alive and unimpaired. That Scotland was once one of the fairest daughters of the Church, history and the noble ruins of monasteries and churches throughout the land, attest. As from Ireland and England, so from Scotland, missionaries went forth to Christianize Europe. But the sad day of robbery and plunder came, and at the time when Father Gillis began his labours in Edinburgh, churches were few, priests a rarity, and the Vicars-Apostolic, great men as they were, unable by reason of the poverty of their resources, to minister to the spiritual wants of the faithful. But now, thank God, a happier day seems dawning. The Hierarchy has been restored, Religious Orders have found their way back to Scotland, churches and convents are being erected, and a new spirit seems to animate the hearts of the people. May it not be that the prayers of those great Saints whose mission it was to plant the Faith in Scotland in bygone ages, are about to be answered, and that Scotland is soon to be restored to the bosom of the Church, to resume her former place as a missionary nation?

But to return to the subject of our sketch. Bishop Carruthers having been duly installed in his office, and the affairs of the Vicariate set in order, Father Gillis at once set about his project of bringing a body of Religious to Edinburgh. In this he was warmly supported by the Bishop, who foresaw the great advantage to be derived from the establishment of such an institution in his episcopal city. Great, however, as was Father Gillis' zeal and firm his confidence in the ultimate success of his project, many years must have elapsed e'er he could have carried it out, had not Providence sent to his aid a friend who was to furnish the necessary means to enable him to proceed without delay. This was Mr. John Menzies, of Pitfodels, a wealthy layman and a pious Catholic, to whom the Church in Scotland is greatly

indebted for many of the blessings she now enjoys. This excellent man had no sooner heard of Father Gillis' project than he sought him out and placing his purse unreservedly at his disposal, promised his hearty co-operation towards the carrying out of the scheme. This was welcome news. I have already referred to the poverty of the Scottish Church at that time. The majority of the faithful were poor and it was no easy matter to raise revenue sufficient to support the few priests in the country and to preserve the faith from utter extinction. To launch out into a venture, therefore, such as Father Gillis had in view, would have been manifestly impossible, had not a benefactor arisen in the person of Mr. Menzies. The first and greatest difficulty having thus been surmounted, the next step was to look about and settle upon some Order likely to adapt itself to the peculiar circumstances of the Church in a country like Scotland. Naturally Father Gillis thoughts turned to Luçon, to the Ursulines of Jesus, to whom he had been so greatly attracted during his sojourn there with Mgr. Soyer, and after earnest deliberation and prayer he decided to invite them to establish a convent in Edinburgh. But another difficulty here presented itself. The community at Luçon was composed almost entirely of Frenchwomen, none of whom it was at all probable had any acquaintance with the English language, and it would have been an awkward matter, to say the least of it, for them as a teaching Order to take up their residence in Scotland, speaking a foreign tongue, and thus unable for a considerable period of time to communicate with those around them. But God ever watches over His Church, and raises up instruments wherewith to do his work, and this was to be no exception to the rule. By a kind of a decree of Providence, Father Gillis was joined by two Scotchwomen whom God sent to him to be his fellow-labourers during this anxious time. The first of these was Miss Ann Agnes Traill, aged 30, daughter of a minister of the Established Church of Scotland, who went to Italy in 1826 to cultivate her remarkable talent for painting, and was there converted to the Faith. Of this remarkable woman I may have something to say at a future time, but suffice it here to relate that the story of her conversion, written by herself at the request of her confessor, reveals a character of great beauty and of talents of a very high order. Returning to Scotland after her conversion, and then to London, she met Father Gillis at the Benedictine Convent at Hammersmith, and having listened to the recital of his project, offered herself for the work. The other was Miss Margaret Clapperton, aged 21, a born Catholic, who, hearing of the project, wrote to Father Gillis, also offering herself. As may be supposed these two vocations greatly encouraged him and removed from his mind a source of some anxiety. The two women proceeded in August 1833 to Chavagnes, the Mother House of the Ursulines of Jesus, to commence their noviciate, and on Rosary Sunday, Oct. 6, received the habit, Miss Traill taking the name of Sister Agnes Xavier and Miss Clapperton that of Sister Margaret Teresa. The noviciate being completed, they returned to Scotland in company with Rev. Mother St. Hilaire, Mother St. Paula and seven Sisters—in all eleven. Father Gillis had purchased for them a large house and garden in the suburbs south of the city, known as "Whitehouse," the same in which Principal Robertson had written his "History of Charles V," Home, his "Douglas," and Blair, his famous "Lectures." This house was, however, too small, and an addition to it was begun without delay. As an illustration of the state of feeling towards the Church in Scotland during those days, the following rather amusing story is instructive, and may not be amiss here:

"One day while the labourers were employed in digging the foundation of the chapel and excavating for the construction of the vaults, a Catholic gentleman (Col. Macdonell) entered the grounds to see how they were proceeding. He was much amused by an old Presbyterian Minister and his wife, who were gazing down into the excavations with looks of horror. At length one said to the other: 'There will be deeds of darkness done here.'"

And this was by no means an exceptional case. Excitement in Edinburgh ran high. Nothing was talked of