

REPORT

OF THE

Board of French Evangelization

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

IN no country does the Church of Rome possess greater wealth and power and influence than in the Province of Quebec. Out of an entire population of less than 1,200,000 she claims fully 1,000,000 votaries, nearly all of whom are of French descent.

By royal edict she has the right to levy tithes upon the products of the soil for the support of her clergy, together with special assessments for the erection of ecclesiastical establishments. By means of these and the large grants of land made to the Jesuits and other religious orders in the early history of the Province the Church has amassed enormous wealth, and, virtually controlling the Legislature, she has established herself more firmly in this Province than ever she did in France or Italy or even perhaps in Spain. With the most bitter and uncompromising hostility to the dissemination of God's truth she strives, and that but too successfully in the past, to keep the people in slavish ignorance and superstition. No one at all acquainted with her wealth and power and influence,—no one who has seen her magnificent churches and seminaries and convents (in marked contrast to the adjoining poverty-stricken huts of her votaries); no one who knows the number of her ecclesiastics who swarm in every section of the country; no one familiar with the hold she has on the vast bulk of the people, but is constrained to feel that it is not by human might nor by human power this Church is to be driven from her strongholds, but by the omnipotent Spirit of the living God.

And herein lies our hope. To the eye of sense it would seem utterly futile to cope with this giant system of error and superstition,—to the eye of faith it is far otherwise. Prior to the Reformation in Europe were not the nations on that continent in a condition as dark and seemingly hopeless as is Quebec to-day? Yet the Spirit of the Lord moved on the face of the land and suddenly there came light and gladsome liberty to northern and western Europe. So the time is coming—is not far distant, we believe—when by the same blessed Spirit Quebec will be disenthralled and her people rejoice in that liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. But to bring about this happy era work is necessary,—faithful, self-denying, prayerful work,—for, to quote the words of the late Dr. Norman McLeod, "What may appear suddenly and unexpectedly, may nevertheless be the necessary results of long preparation; like the water or the gas, which suddenly enter a thousand city houses to refresh and illuminate them, but which are the results of years of labour in digging trenches, laying pipes and erecting reservoirs, during all which time no streams of water or of gas were ever present to the senses." To help on this work of preparation, to aid in bringing about the desired and longed for time, and to give to the French-speaking people of the whole Dominion the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ is the great aim and object of the Board; and though it is as yet but early morn, but the dawn, the break of day, still progress has been made. Rays of light have penetrated into not a few districts of the country, cheering and gladdening darkened souls and enabling them to see behind the veil with which a corrupt faith had tried to hide the crucified One; and these rays, it is comforting to know, are but the first beams of that sun which is yet to stream into every corner of the Province now lying in darkness and steep in its glory the whole land.

PROGRESS OF FRENCH CANADIAN EVANGELIZATION.

Though Canada ceased to be a French colony and was ceded to Britain in 1763, yet the Protestant Churches of the parent country neglected for fifty long years the spiritual interests of the French Canadians,—the Church of Rome, during these years, gaining many proselytes from English-speaking nominal Protestants who had settled in the colony.

The first French Protestant missionary was a Wesleyan, from Guernsey, who laboured among the French in several parts of the Province of Quebec from 1815 to 1821. During the next thirteen years nothing seems to have been done. The Grande Ligne Mission was established in 1834 and the French Canadian Missionary Society in 1839. This latter Society, while supported largely by Presbyterians, was non-denominational. After an honourable record of over forty years it recently withdrew from the field because of the prosecution of the work of French Canadian Evangelization by the several branches of the Protestant Church in Canada. During the period of its existence it circulated upwards of 57,000 copies of God's Word and some 650,000 French tracts and religious