

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.

PROTESTANT HISTORIANS ON THE EARLY JESUIT MISSIONS IN CANADA.

THE world has heard a great deal about the Jesuits. Since that eventful night in the year 1534, when Ignatius Loyola gathered around him in the cemetery of Mont-matre those six chosen souls who were to co-operate with him in stemming that fierce tide of heresy and infidelity called "the Reformation," no body of men has occupied so great a share of the world's attention or has been the object of such constant and unrelenting persecution as the religious order known to history as the Society of Jesus. And this is not a subject for wonder or surprise. It bears the name of the Redeemer of mankind; its sole aim and purpose is to preach that Name and to make it known to the uttermost parts of the earth; its highest glory is to share with its great Master, Jesus Christ, the hatred and enmity of the forces of sin and hell and death. What wonder is it, then, that the prayer of its founder has been heard or his prediction fulfilled? "You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake," are the words of Our Lord. "Hypocrite! hypocrite! May I live loaded with this insult; may I die absorbed in this cry, my Saviour and my God, and may my shame be your glory!" was the prayer of St. Ignatius. And how clearly he foresaw the future answer to his prayer, scarcely a page of the world's history from that day to this but proclaims in letters of blood.

But while the Society of Jesus had to bear so great a share of suffering and persecution, it has not lacked the appreciation and admiration of all the best elements in the world. Even those who hate the name of Jesuit most and are most zealous in devising schemes of destruction against the Society, have paused in the midst of their labours to praise the zeal of its members and to admire their courage and fortitude. The Jesuit missions have elicited but one verdict from mankind—"glorious, heroic!" And not least glorious of these were the intrepid missionaries who watered the soil of Canada with their blood. The story is not unknown to the majority of Canadians. It has been often told by skilful hands, and Protestant writers have vied with Catholic in paying the tribute of respect to their self-denying labours. But true as this is, in the heat aroused by the supposed encroachments of the Society in our own day, it is too often forgotten that the Jesuits are the pioneers of this country, and what manner of men they were in the old days, seems to carry no weight in estimating the character of those now living. It seems well, therefore, to bring together in these columns the testimony of a few well-known Protestant historians, to the character and career of those members of the Order who spent themselves for the establishment of a true Christian civilization on this Continent.

Gregg, in his "History of the United States," thus writes of them:

"The creation, the development, and the colonization of New France, its trade, its industry, its exploring expeditions carried further into the interior than either Spaniard or Englishman dreamed of venturing for another century, were the work and the glory of the Jesuits. The Spaniards appeared in the New World as unscrupulous conquerors, merciless extortioners, tyrants, and persecutors; the Dutch chiefly as traders; the English first as pirates and later as settlers, eating the natives out of their hunting-grounds; the French primarily as missionaries and benefactors. The disciples of Loyola devoted themselves, with no after-thought of greed or gain, to Christianize and civilize the Aborigines. They ventured further than the most daring pioneers, enduring hardships from which colonists and conquerors alike recoiled, abode for years in the squalid hovels of the natives, lived and died with and for their converts, and were martyred one after another, not through fanaticism or wanton provocations, but because they would baptize dying infants, in the knowledge that superstition would

hold them guilty of death. All that is bright and pure and glorious in the annals of the infant province, all the noblest chapters in the early history of American colonization, belong to the Order of Jesus; its failures and disasters were brought about by the greed or passion, the ambition or the folly, of the lay associates who controlled the military and civil government."

Not less generous or less eloquent is the testimony of a Canadian writer, Rev. Dr. Withrow. In his "History of Canada" occurs the following passage:

"Nowhere did the Jesuit missionaries exhibit grander moral heroism, or sublimer self-sacrifice; nowhere did they encounter greater sufferings, with more pious fortitude, or meet with a more tragical fate than in the wilderness-missions of New France. They were the pioneers of civilization, the path-finders of empire on this continent. With breviary and crucifix, at the command of the Superior of the Order at Quebec, they wandered all over the vast country stretching from the rocky shores of Nova Scotia to the distant Far West, from the regions around Hudson's Bay to the mouth of the Mississippi River. Paddling all day in their bark canoes; sleeping at night on the naked rock; toiling over rugged portages, or through pathless forests; pinched by hunger, gnawed to the bone by cold, often dependent for subsistence on acorns, the bark of trees, or the bitter moss to which they had given their name*; lodging in Indian wigwams, whose acrid smoke blinded their eyes, and whose obscene riot was unutterably loathsome to every sense; braving peril and persecution, and even death itself, they persevered in their path of self-sacrifice for the glory of God, [*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, the motto of the Order] the salvation of souls, the advancement of their Order, and the extension of New France. 'Not a cape was turned, not a river was entered,' writes Bancroft, 'but a Jesuit led the way.' . . . The missionaries walked in the shadow of a perpetual peril. Often the tomahawk gleamed above their head, or a deadly ambush lurked for their lives. But beneath the protection of St. Mary and St. Joseph, as they devoutly believed, they walked unhurt. The murderous hand was restrained, the death-winged arrow was turned aside; undismayed by their danger, undeterred by lowering looks and muttered curses, they calmly went on their way of mercy. . . . They shared the privations and discomforts of savages. They endured the torments of filth and vermin, of stifling, acrid smoke, parching the throat and inflaming the eyes till the letters of the breviary seemed written in blood. . . . Yet the hearts of the missionaries quailed not; they were sustained by a lofty enthusiasm that courted danger as a condition of success. The gentle Lalemant prayed that if the blood of the martyrs were the necessary seed of the Church, its effusion should not be wanting. Nor did the mission lack in time that dread baptism."

And Parkman, his "Jesuits in North America," is one long tribute to the members of the Order, the very reading of which brings tears to the eyes. He cannot understand the supernatural character of their ecstasies and visions, and he is unable to appreciate their serene confidence in the protection of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, whom they constantly invoked, but none the less he recognizes "the earnestness of their faith and the intensity of their zeal." "One great aim," he says, "engrossed their lives. They aimed at the conversion of a continent. From their hovel on the St. Charles they surveyed a field of labour whose vastness might tire the wings of thought itself; a scene repellent and appalling, darkened with omens of peril and woe. 'For the greater glory of God' they would act or wait, dare, suffer or die, yet all in unquestioning subjection to the authority of the Superiors, in whom they recognized the agents of Divine authority itself." And again:

"When we see them toiling on foot from one infected town to another, wading through the sodden snow, under the bare and dripping forests, drenched with incessant rains, till they desried at length through the storm the clustered dwellings of some barbarous hamlet—when we see them entering, one after another, these wretched abodes of misery and darkness, and all for one sole end—the baptism of the sick and dying—we may smile at the futility of the object, but we must needs admire the self-sacrificing zeal with which it was pursued."

Extracts of this kind might be multiplied innumerable, but our space forbids extensive quotation. The interested reader we refer to Parkman's valuable work, a monument of learning and research despite at times its narrow vision. One more extract must here suffice:

"The Jesuits had borne all that the human frame seems capable of bearing. They had escaped as by miracle from torture and

* "Jesuits' Moss"—*tripe de roche*—a coarse, edible lichen which abounds in the northern wastes.