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"Truth is Catholic; proclaim it ever, and God will effect the rest."—BALMEZ.

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THE APOSTLE OF ONTARIO.

Missionary Labors of Father Edmund Burke.*

1794 to 1800.

As nearly as possible one hundred years ago, there passed by on his way from Kingston to Niagara, an Irish secular priest, who, after laboring for nearly seven years in this western country, was made Bishop of Zion and First Vicar-Apostolic of Nova



Rt. Rev. EDMUND BURKE.

Scotia and who by his successor in the ecclesiastical government of that province, the present Archbishop of Halifax, is designated as the Apostle of Ontario.

In 1753 Edmund Burke was born in Maryborough, County Kildare, Ireland. Despite the penal enactments meant to crush out the intellectual life of Catholics the love of learning was strong in the people. As soon as he was able, therefore, he went to Paris, and in the University there made a brilliant course distinguishing himself in theology and mathematics. Soon after being ordained he was made parish priest of Kildare, where, in 1783, he became embroiled in some discussions which arose on the appointment of Rev. Dr. Delaney as coadjutor to the Bishop of that see. The unpleasantness of his position led him to think again of an old project. He wished to become a missionary. Having obtained the favorable advice of Dr. Carpenter, then Archbishop of Dublin, he was, by the influence of that prelate, sent to Canada in answer to the call of the Bishop of Quebec for Irish or English priests.

He landed in Quebec in the summer of 1786 and was immediately appointed as a professor in the seminary, where his lectures on philosophy, mathematics and astronomy were received with great applause. That he was not inclined to this kind of life appears from some of his letters written at that time. He complains that the Governor General would not allow him to give a public instruction on any religious subject in the city of

Quebec and argues that teaching the catechism is a more rational employment for a priest than giving lectures in astronomy. In 1790 his thoughts were already definitely turned toward Upper Canada and he was seeking to be sent thither. He asked Dr. Troy, who had by then succeeded to the see of Dublin, to intercede with the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda at Rome, to the end that he might be empowered to administer the sacrament of Confirmation.

Mgr. Hubert, the then Bishop of Quebec, did not agree in this view of the case, and it was not until 1791 that the desire of the good priest was realized. An unexpected circumstance was the occasion of the change of policy.

Bluff old Governor Simcoe besought the Governor General to have a priest of tried fidelity to the British cause sent out to the settlement beyond Lake Erie to instruct the people in morality and their duty to the King. Father Burke was appointed. Bishop Hubert informed the Propaganda that he had given the missionary a commission of Vicar-General for the whole of Upper Canada. It is noteworthy that Father Burke in requesting to be sent on this mission had mapped out a division of the diocese of Quebec similar to the plan afterwards acted upon by Bishop Plessis, as recounted by his Grace the Archbishop of Kingston in a recent letter to the Registrar. The foresight of the zealous priest has been still further approved in more recent years. At one time he expressed the opinion that the diocese of Quebec should not extend west beyond Three Rivers and that there should be a Bishop at Montreal as well as a separate jurisdiction in Upper Canada. The wisdom of this apportionment is seen in the present division of the government of the Church.

It would appear that at that time the Rev. Alex. Macdonell lived at Montreal and attended some place in Upper Canada, probably New Johnson. His cousin, Roderic, was stationed at St. Regis, and him Father Burke instructed to visit Kingston twice a year. He also ordered Rev. Alex. Macdonell to build a church in his mission and to reside there. It is easy to suppose that this step paved the way for the honors that came afterwards to that priest.

Leaving Kingston on Oct. 14, 1794, he passed by way of Niagara to the base of his mission, Fort Miami, now Maumee City, Ohio. From there he wrote to Dr. Troy that he was in the administration of Upper Canada, with every Episcopal power, except what requires the Episcopal Order.

Here his life was one of the severest hardship. Not only was his life always in danger from wolves, bears, rattlesnakes, but frequently from the Indians and, at least once from the Canadians themselves, from whose savagery he was only saved by his own presence of mind. It was to him Governor Simcoe looked, and wisely, for the prevention of the sale of rum to the Indians. At all times he was a most efficient assistant in promoting the work of the British Government, and when it became necessary to choose, he left his old mission and came to this side of the river, refusing to remain in Detroit.

For the last four years of his mission in this province Father Burke labored

almost alone, unable, for reasons that will appear presently, to obtain the assistance he so much desired, and which was so much needed. He passed between Sandwich, Niagara, York, Kingston and Catarqui, visiting every settlement of Irish and Scotch Catholics he could hear of. In Niagara he found the troops of whom three fourths of officers and men were Catholics, obliged to attend Protestant worship, not indeed from ill will on the part of the commander, but simply as a matter of discipline, the Catholic chaplain not being at hand. The same was the case at Catarqui. He was also anxious to be at Niagara when the legislature was in session, being anxious to see that his people suffered nothing there. He received a small grant of land in most of the new towns, York, for instance. On Feb. 25th, 1800, he wrote from York: "I have come here to see a poor fellow who is to be hanged to-morrow."

In so vast a territory considering the primitive state of the roads and the evils of the semi-military state, it is easy to conceive the immensity of Father Burke's labor during those years. The part he played in the affairs of the country may be inferred from some remarks concerning the Brandts which are contained in the same letter from York just referred to. "The famous Brandt, chief of the Mohawks, says he is a Catholic and has told the Governor, who has spoken of it to me. . . . Brandt himself has spoken to me two or three times, and has requested me to recommend his son to the seminary and to ask the professors to instruct him in the Catholic religion, so that he might be able to rule his village and bring them all to the faith in time. I strongly recommend him to you. The young Indian can read and write English; he is desirous of learning a little Latin and French." It was this younger Brandt who has left so enviable a name.

The one grievance entertained by Father Burke was the insufficiency of priests in the territory where he labored. In a letter to Archbishop Troy he says: "If it just be to sacrifice the salvation of thousands to a handful of the most ignorant and impudent fellows that I ever knew, your Grace will determine."

He frequently desired the Bishop of Quebec to negotiate with the Sulpicians. Eventually he placed his views in the form of a memorial, pointing out the necessity for three priests at Assumption, (Sandwich) and two others at either Kingston or Niagara, one of them to remain at the station, the other to go occasionally and spend at least three months of the year at the other place. He even received the consent of the Sulpicians to this arrangement, but owing to one or another reason the consent of the Bishop was never received and Father Burke was obliged to do the whole work himself. With the exception of the Sandwich settlement the whole country from Lake Huron to Lower Canada was peopled by English, Irish, and Scotch. Some Catholics were among them, and for these Scotch or Irish priests were required. As he could not get them he did all the work himself.

Archbishop O'Brien in commenting upon the non-adoption of Father Burke's plan expresses a passing regret but does not pause to consider the effects of not promoting the wise policy

outlined. It will not be out of place here to mention one of them. Had the arrangement with the Sulpicians been assented to, there would have been active missionaries in Ontario when the great tide of immigration of 1840 to 1850 was pouring in. The Irish Catholics came and found no priests. More than half of them went elsewhere, many more were lost to the Church. It is not too much to say that had consent been given to this plan Ontario would be at least half Catholic to day.

We must extend a word of commendation to the Archbishop of Halifax for the exceedingly interesting and scholarly character of this work of his pen. At another time we shall avail of the opportunity presented by the further chapters concerning Father Burke's later life and the history of the Acadian Church; in the meantime Ontario Catholics are placed under a debt of gratitude to him for the publication of these memorials of the man of whom he says, "Withal doubt he has the honor of being the Apostle of English speaking Ontario, and the founder of its oldest missions."

A Tragedy by Sir Walter Scott.

"Few people are aware," writes Henry Labouchere, "that Sir Walter Scott once wrote a tragedy called 'The House of Aspen.' The substance of the story and part of the diction was borrowed from a dramatic romance called 'The Holy Tribunal,' which fills the sixth volume of the 'Tales of Antiquity,' by Bert Weber. The famous actor, John Kemble, at one time was very anxious to bring out the play at Drury Lane and promised to appear in it with the great Mrs. Siddons. But great objections appeared to this proposal. There was danger that the mainspring of the thing—the binding engagements formed by the members of the Secret Tribunal—might not be sufficiently felt by an English audience, to whom the nature of that singularly mysterious institution was unknown from early association. There was also, according to Kemble's experienced opinion, too much blood, too much of the dire catastrophe of 'Tom Thumb' and 'Hamlet' where almost all the characters die on the stage. It was, beside, esteemed perilous to put the parade of the secret conclave at the mercy of the underlings in the cast and the scene-shifters, who, by a ridiculous motion, gesture, or accident, might turn seriousness and gravity into farce. Sir Walter Scott willingly acquiesced in this reasoning and never afterward made any attempt to gain the honors of dramatic authorship and the glory of the stage."

The "Polish American Catholic Church" at Freeland, which was composed of seceders from the true church, has disbanded. They purchased a church property and had appointed Rev. Father Dembinski as pastor. Some time ago the congregation began warring among themselves, which resulted in resignation of Rev. Dembinski recently. The trustees now have a church on their hands with a big debt, no pastor and few parishioners.

The demand for Ayer's Hair Vigor in such widely separated regions as South America, Spain, Australia, and India has kept pace with the home consumption, which goes to show that these people know a good thing when they try it.

* Memoirs of Rt. Rev. Edmund Burke, Bishop of Zion, First Vicar-Apostolic of Nova Scotia. By Cornelius O'Brien, D.D., Archbishop of Halifax.—Ottawa, Theobald & Co.