

CHURCH IN CANADA.

The following statements are extracted from a letter addressed by Bishop Mountain of Montreal, to the Secretary of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and published in the Correspondence of the Society for 1836.

The case of the Church in Canada, with respect to the formation and maintenance of its Establishment, is very briefly this: the territory having been acquired by the crown of Great Britain in 1759, a Protestant population by degrees flowed in, with the prospect of course of continued accessions. Measures were therefore taken by the Government to provide for the spiritual wants of this population. In 1791, when the two distinct provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were established, by what is commonly called the Quebec Act—the royal instructions to the governors having previously declared the Church of England to be the established religion of the Colony, to which instructions a reference is introduced in the Act—a reservation of one-seventh of all the lands in Upper Canada, and of all such lands in the Lower Province as were not already occupied by the French inhabitants, was made for the support of a Protestant Clergy. This measure was introductory to the appointment of a Bishop, who went out in 1783, and whose diocese was expressly comprehended in the province of Canterbury, in the same manner as any diocese in the same province in England. The Bishop procured the erection of a cathedral at Quebec, which was consecrated in 1804, and invested with all honors, dignities, pre-eminences, and distinctions of right belonging to an episcopal seat and Cathedral church.

The little value attached, in the earlier stages of British possession, to tracts of wild land, and the hopelessness of obtaining a *tenantry* upon the clergy-*lo's*, so long as the fee-simple of the same quantity could be obtained in the way of grants, or for a trifling consideration caused that property to be for a long time of necessity unproductive; and it was, in a manner, disregarded by the Government, in whose hands the management of it resided. In 1806, however, measures were taken to erect a Corporation in each province, for the management of the reserves; but it was not till 1819 that the Corporations went into operation. About this time, and at intervals since, several parishes of the Church of England were legally constituted by the Government in the Lower Province. In 1821 each province was erected into an Archdeaconry; and in 1825, the Upper Province was divided into two—the Archdeaconry of York, and that of Kingston. It was in this year that the decease of the first Bishop of Quebec took place, and in January following his successor was consecrated. The Government has since engaged a house for his Lordship at Toronto, (the present name of the seat of Government in Upper Canada,) to give facilities for dividing his residence between the two provinces.

I have been desirous of thus exhibiting at one view the successive steps which have been taken towards the regular establishment of the Church of England in Canada, in order distinctly to show, that a proper branch of the Established Church of England has been there constituted and recognised by formal, solemn, and repeated Acts of the Government and Legislature of Great Britain.

If, then, after all that has been here stated, the protection of England is to be withdrawn, according to the tenor of late proceedings and declarations of authority, from this branch of the Establishment, it would appear that such a dereliction must be founded either upon the fact that the experiment has failed, and the means which have been provided are without an object in the country which calls for their applications; or else that the country itself can now afford those means in some form which had not been anticipated, and that not only the season is come for weaning the infant Establishment from the bosom of the parent State, but that new supplies have offered themselves upon the spot, which dispense with all necessity for retaining the provision originally assigned to the Church.

Now, with respect to the first point, the fact is as opposite to the supposition just taken as can be well conceived. The demand for the ministrations

of the Church of England in the Canadas has been constantly progressive from the date of the conquest; the supply has never at any one period been sufficient; and its inadequacy is at this moment felt more severely than ever. Upon the arrival of Bishop Mountain, he found six Clergymen established in the whole diocese, with, I believe, fewer churches. During his episcopate, the number of Clergy was augmented by means of the bounty of Government and the Society to upwards of fifty, and a corresponding number of churches was erected. The number of both (I am not speaking with minute precision) has been since doubled. I am in possession of abundant documents to show that the applications to the Bishops for Ministers, during all this period, have far exceeded the means at their command to answer them; and that even on the part of religious bodies, not originally episcopal, there has existed, in many instances, a decided disposition to coalesce with the Church,—a disposition which might have been improved to the happiest advantage for the permanent interests of religion in the Colony, but for the frequent inability of the Bishops to provide for the demand, and the unsettled condition of questions relating to the reserves.

Of the fruitful and prosperous labours of the present Bishop, when a Missionary, for the space of twenty years, either stationary or itinerant through the whole diocese, it must be unnecessary to speak; the churches of which he procured the erection, the congregations which he formed, the happy change which he was often the instrument of effecting in the habits of the people, are the witnesses of his acceptance among them, and the monuments of his success. It is indeed difficult to suppose that the Clergy would have persevered in the fatigues and exertions which, in numerous instances, they have undergone, unless they had been stimulated at once by experiencing a desire on the part of the people for their ministrations, and a hope in their own breasts, from what they had been permitted to effect, that the Divine blessing was with them in their work.

I could furnish multiplied details of this nature, which have been little known to the world, and which, on that very account, are the more valuable, as being exempted from all suspicion of parade. I leave them under the veil as it regards the names; but since the Society has been sometimes reproached with a presumed character of inertness attaching to the Clergy in Canada, and since that bounty, which is so greatly needed from the British public, is proportioned to the estimate formed of its profitable application, I cannot forbear from adverting to a very few simple facts, as examples of the statements which might be put forth in recommendation of the Canadian Church. I do not, of course, mean that the labours of all the Clergy are in accordance with the picture which I proceed to sketch—some are, from situation, not exposed to any necessity for hardships or severe exertions; and it must be expected to happen that some should be less devoted than others to the cause of Christ; but not to speak of the episcopal labours which, from the prominent situation of those who have successively discharged them, are of necessity better known, I could mention such occurrences, as that a Clergyman, upon a circuit of duty, has passed twelve nights in the open air, six in boats upon the water, and six in the depths of the trackless forest with Indian guides; and a Deacon, making his *insolitus nisus* when scarcely flegged, as it were, for the more arduous flights of duty, has performed journeys of 120 miles in the midst of winter upon snow-shoes. I could tell how some of these poor unpaid servants of the Gospel have been worn down in strength before their time at remote and laborious stations. I could give many a history of persevering travels in the ordinary exercise of ministerial duty, in defiance of difficulties and accidents, through woods and roads almost impracticable, and in all the severities of weather; or of rivers traversed amid masses of floating ice, when the experienced canoe-men would not have proceeded without being urged. I have known one minister sleep all night abroad, when there was snow upon the ground. I have known others answer calls to a sick bed at the distance of fifteen or twenty miles in the wintry woods; and others who have travelled all night to keep a Sunday appointment, after a call of this nature on the Saturday. These are things which had been done by

the Clergy of Lower Canada, and in almost every single instance which has been here given by Missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

There are several straggling and ill-tended flocks, from the paucity of shepherds, in the settlements which lie up the Ottawa River; among these the inhabitants of a settlement called the Gore, are situated eighteen miles from the parish of St. Andrews, the station of the Rev. W. Abbott, on the River Ottawa, and are visited by that gentleman on a *week-day* once in a month. At the time when I was there, there was scarcely an exception to the profession of the Church of England among these people—none, I believe, to a willingness of disposition to conform to that Church; not a few were warmly affectionate and devout members, and the number of communicants was stated to be eighty. They are strangers, however, to the ordinances of the Sabbath; and if the mercy of God does not raise up help for them, it is more easy than encouraging to forebode what will be their condition in another generation. In the township of Kilkenny, lying near to Montreal, I have been assured by one of the principal inhabitants that there are 120 families, and that they all belong to our own Church. I do not think that any of our Clergy have ever penetrated to this settlement; and I have no reason to doubt the melancholy truth of an account given me, that the people hearing of a Protestant minister whom some circumstance had brought into the adjoining seigneurie, came trooping through the woods with their infants in their arms, to present them for baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to one who was a preacher of the Unitarian persuasion! The station of the Church of England nearest to Kilkenny is that at Rawdon, but there is no communication except by making a prodigious circuit; and the proper charge of the Missionary at Rawdon is itself far more extensive and more scattered than can be well provided for by the labour of one man.

In the county of Megantic, in the south of the St. Lawrence, nearly opposite to Quebec, where new settlements are now opening in different townships every year, and where, according to the last census, the members of the Church of England constitute a majority of the whole population, the Rev. J. L. Alexander, Missionary of the Society, is the only Clergyman of the Church of England. His residence is at Leeds, where a church has been erected. I am persuaded that he is faithful and pious, and he divides his labours as he best can; but he experiences the same difficulty which is experienced by many other servants of the Society: if he concentrates his exertions upon the head-quarters of his mission, he leaves many outposts neglected, and exposes the Church in his person, to many complaints; if he attempts to spread his ministrations over the face of the surrounding country, his principal and immediate congregation suffer by necessary consequence, and no decided fruit and effect of the Gospel ministry among his people are seen any where within the limits of his charge. A neat church has been built at a place called St. Giles, in this neighbourhood, which remains as yet unassigned to any single denomination, but which would have now belonged to the Church of England (according to the intention of the original projectors, and, in particular, of a lady at home, who has an interest in the spot, and following up the intentions of her deceased husband, gave communion-plate for the church), had means been at the command of the Bishop of Quebec to clear off a small incumbrance upon the building, and to promise some stated ministrations to the people. I conceive that there is an ample field for the labours of two more Missionaries in the county.

To be concluded in our next number.

Antonius, archbishop of Florence in the fifteenth century, after long, laborious life, often, in his dying moments declared, as he had frequently done in health, "To serve God is to reign."—*Church History*. It will not avail to heat a man off from drunkenness into a sober formality; a skillful master of assemblies lays his axe at the root; drive still to the heart.—*Dr. Owen*.

In my pursuits, of whatever kind, let this come to my mind, "How much shall I value this on a death bed?"—*President Edwards*.