

# The Presbyterian Review.

Issued EVERY THURSDAY, from the office of the Publishers, Rooms No. 20, 21, 22, 25 Aberdeen Block, South-East corner Adelaide and Victoria Streets.

TERMS, \$1.50 per annum.

All communications for either Business or Editorial Departments should be addressed PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Drawer 2461, Toronto, Ont.

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Toronto, January, 25, 1894

## French Evangelization.

THE furor over Mr. Papineau's admission to the Presbyterian Church, of which the leading French-Canadian papers now seem to be heartily ashamed, has turned upon the devoted head of the venerable Father Chiniquy. The part which Father Chiniquy took in the ceremony was, if a proud, a modest one, and the vituperation poured on him through the press can be explained only on the supposition that public opinion having risen between Mr. Papineau and his foes, the latter must find a more defenceless victim for its unbounded rage. But it will avail little if sixty years of Father Chiniquy's life history be ransacked and be bespattered with the mud of malice. His works stand forth to commend him; persecutions many and dire have but endeared him all the more to those whose sympathies he has won, and the French-Canadian press but attracts the sunlight of truth and intelligence to the intolerance of its favoured creed by the course it has chosen to take in the case of Mr. Papineau, and has always taken when its *bête noir* in chief, Dr. Chiniquy, has been concerned. The eyes of many who have hitherto regarded with indifference or complacency the French-Canadian question, have been opened; people are asking in astonishment if these things be so, if in this last decade of the nineteenth century and in a free Canada scenes such as have been acted in Sorrel, in Maskinonge, and in Montreal can be possible. The natural, and we hope the speedy, sequence to such an awakening will be an earnest enquiry as to what is being done in the field of French Evangelization, and whether the Church is supporting the efforts of the labourers in that trying, hard, field. If we turn to the interesting report of the Board of French Evangelization, whose work we have on many occasions commended to our readers, we find that the operations of the Board are carried on in Ontario and New Brunswick as well as in Quebec, although, as a matter of course, chiefly in Quebec, where eighteen pastors, twelve missionaries, seven missionary-colporteurs, and twenty-six teachers laboured last year. The following extracts will show how work was begun and what has been accomplished:—

“When the Protestant missionary, some fifty-five years ago, turned to the evangelization of the French-Canadian Roman Catholic population, numbering about

six hundred thousand, his means and resources were very limited. There was not a known Protestant French Canadian. The people were devotedly attached to the superstitions and teachings of Rome. He began in the homes, by teaching both parents and children, and conversing on religious subjects with the fathers of families. The evening school was soon begun, in which the Bible was the reading book and often the only text book. In visiting from house to house he turned the conversation upon the Bible and Bible topics, rather than upon politics and kindred questions. In this way the light of the Gospel was carried into ‘the gross darkness that covered the people.’ With the light of the Gospel came life, which revealed itself in the awakening mind and conscience. Soon the influence of the mission schools was so felt that the Roman Catholic clergy were aroused to establish the little country schools. They did it reluctantly. But in them pupils were taught at least to read. With knowing to read, came the necessity for something to read. Books were scarce then as good books are still. A few newspapers appeared. Some devoted to the interest of the Roman Catholic Church lived; others aiming at the enlightenment and instruction of the people died, or dragged out a very precarious existence. Among the latter was the *Semeur Canadien*, the first organ of evangelical Protestantism. It did much good in its time and helped to consolidate French-Canadian Protestantism. It was followed by the *Moniteur*, which in turn was succeeded by *L'Aurore*, which still exists, and with the *Citoyen Franco-Américain*, published at Springfield, Mass., represent French Protestantism to-day. . . . During these years the Roman Catholic schools and press have been also developing. In the fifteen hundred and twenty-nine towns and villages of the Province, there are four thousand one hundred and thirty Roman Catholic schools, with an attendance of 223,000 scholars. But what of the results of these schools, after half a century's clerical control of education in the Province? Let *Le Monde*, a French Catholic organ, reply. ‘The other day, in order to defeat a bill excluding illiterate persons from school commissions, the Provincial Secretary declared that there were municipalities unprovided with persons able to read and write. This is sad, this is shameful. Really, one can boast of our system of public instruction . . . it is fine, it is fruitful. Nevertheless, if anyone raises his voice to ask for reforms, an effort is made to stone him. There are in our midst men who are anxious to leave the French-Canadians in ignorance. These people are afraid, for the day when all can read and understand what they read, there will be trouble in the camp and a great sweeping off of abuses and privileges. French-Canadian municipalities where no school commissioners able to read and write can be found!!! This is declared in open House, and no one rises to ask for an immediate revival of our school system.’”

In these closing sentences we have a picture which ought to impress itself on the heart of every well-wisher of Canada. It is not drawn by this paper. It is given by a responsible, and well-informed committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and is signed by names honoured throughout the length and breadth of the land. Surely there is here room for serious reflection and for consecrated help to carry on a thrice much-needed work. When alongside this picture are placed the