

CATHOLICISM IN CANADA.

Sectarianism, &c

Translated from the "Le Canadien" for the N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

The return of a great number of Protestants to the Catholic Church is a fact worthy of remark, at the present time, which excites the attention of the world. We do not receive a religious journal from the United States, England, France, &c., which does not tell us of numerous conversions in every part of these countries, among all classes of society.

It is only the Catholic journals of Lower Canada which have not spoken as yet of like conversions. It is not to be inferred, therefore, that there have been none or that they have been very rare. It is very true that the obstacles to the conversion of Protestants are greater here, than in most other countries. The Protestant part of the population is English, and claims naturally its pretensions to domination and superiority, to its other strong national and religious prejudices. The difference of language is a wall of separation which prevents an intercourse with Catholics, and leaves those prejudices to subsist in full vigor.

In the meanwhile, notwithstanding all these obstacles, the conversions to Catholicism in Lower Canada are frequent. To be convinced of this, it may suffice to make allusion to those which have taken place in Quebec, during a certain number of years, and during one year in particular.

It has been proved that during the cholera of 1832, there were no fewer than eighty Protestants who solicited the assistance of the clergy, and embraced the Catholic faith upon the bed of death, in the city of Quebec alone. We have been informed that at least an equal number of Protestants died Catholics in Montreal, during the same visitation.

But when we say that the conversions are frequent among us, we do not intend to speak of conversions made under those extraordinary circumstances, in the last hour of life; at that hour when we fear God alone, and when we have in view no other interests than those of the soul—we wish to mention only the conversions which are made daily, and which are found recorded upon the registry of the Parish.

Those registries verify that *four hundred and eighteen* Protestants made abjuration of their faith, in the Parish of Quebec alone, in 1826. Many of those converts were the fathers and mothers of families, where the conversion naturally included that of their children; but those children are not comprised in this number. There have been at least twenty-four conversions per year, in the Parish of Quebec, since 1826.

During the last there are counted forty-one, and in the month of January of this year there were registered twenty. We can judge from this of the number of conversions which are made during the year, in other parts of the province, and it is easy to see that the religious movement that leads the Protestants to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church, is no less manifest in Canada than in other countries.

The proof that this religious movement in Canada is not limited to the towns of Quebec and Montreal, and is besides of a date as recent as that we have just indicated, is found in the Report read and adopted, the 6th of March, 1843, at the "First Anniversary of the Association of the Presbyterian Congregations of Montreal, in aid of Missions"—and published in the *Montreal Gazette* of the 18th of April, and in the *Herald* of the 20th. The members of the Presbyterian Association of Montreal, ministers and laity, orthodox and dissenting, proclaim to the world, in this official Report, that "the majority—nearly the whole"—of the Protestant establishment of English ascendancy in Canada, have either embraced the Catholic faith, or else ceased to believe in the different forms of Protestantism which were imported with them, and that their descendants have naturally followed their examples. These assertions may appear exaggerated, but to show that we do not invent or misstate them, we present the words of the official Protestant Report itself.—

"It is nearly a century since this colony has been a province of Great Britain.—During this long period, until very recently, scarcely an effort has been made to alleviate the moral degradation, resulting from the absence of religious instruction. Since the conquest of the country by Wolfe, each year has brought an increase of emigrant settlers from the British Isles, without being accompanied by a preacher or an instructor; and these settlers, as fast as they arrived, either scattered themselves over the country, where they established themselves in separate localities, among the Roman Catholic population, or among the early immigrants or their descendants. Thus, surrounded by the superstitions of the one, and the religious indifference of the other, and totally deprived of the means of religious improvement, all the moral impressions which they had received in the country of their forefathers, lost their influence in a little time, and the majority of the early settlers became either Catholics or Infidels; and what they became, their descendants continued to be—of course more confirmed in the creed which was adopted, and still more debased in ignorance and vice. Such are the paths in which almost all the early immigrants have trod, and we now see the woful state of our thus long neglected brethren.

"A writer, in his remarks upon the degeneracy of the new immigrants, expresses himself thus: 'I have found by the observation of many years, that it follows generally a regular progression—a family of immigrants established themselves in a place where the people are composed either of Catholics, or the almost barbarous descendants of Protestant immigrants. In the first case, the family so situated find themselves exposed to the many deteriorating influences of all the follies and errors of their neighbourhood. At first, and during a short space of time, the fathers and mothers, especially, resist this influence; but as many circumstances concur to strengthen the predominating example and opinion, this resistance is very soon overcome, the voice of conscience

grows weak, the torch of reason begins to be obscured, and emits but a feeble ray, the judgment resigns its sovereignty, and family aspirations after God are blotted out. In the meanwhile the children grow up under the discipline, not of a pious family, not of a Sunday School, but of their companions of the same age, rude and vicious, who seldom fail to make them like themselves. They are acquainted with the religion only which they see and hear in the locality where they find themselves. They willingly frequent the places dedicated to the worship of the Roman Catholic Religion, and, little by little, they conform to the wishes of their Catholic companions, (shall we say their instructors?) until finally they become one with them in religion and every mode of thought. Here their Protestant distinction dies, and in a few years there is not the least trace visible of such Protestant distinction, unless the name alone. Or if such a family goes to establish itself among the degenerate descendants of Protestants, its condition becomes rather worse than better, for there, irreligion, with all that accompanies it, rears its impious head, and the immigrant disregarding the danger, becomes very soon a victim to the unchristian tenets and frightful incredulity of his neighbours.'

"This is not (pursues the Report) an exaggerated description; it is a simple exposition of such things as appear, from time to time, to throw light upon the moral history of our long neglected brethren."

The Committee add that, in order the better to ascertain "the spiritual wants of the country, they had printed circulars, and from personal narrative, your committee are confirmed in the opinion that the degree and extent of this want, and its effects, are nearly too great to be believed. They have discovered some families, of both sexes, not very far from this city, who have never put a foot in a place dedicated to religious worship, who have never heard a sermon, and who, nevertheless, bear the name of Presbyterians. In many parts of the country there are families who have been ten, twenty, thirty, and sometimes even forty, years without a bible. Some of them have declared, that they have heard speak of Bibles, but they have never seen any; and one preacher has said that he has not had any bible for two years. Several members of the committee have given themselves some labour to assure themselves of the truth of these facts, and they find that the more they continued their researches, the more it became evident that the lamentable effects of the want of Religion to their long neglected brethren are not yet fully known."

The reverend authors of the Report attribute this "spiritual want of the country," this deplorable state of their long neglected brethren," and these "lamentable effects," to the want of Ministers, Instructors, Bibles, and above all, money! But, do not our cities, on the contrary, possess Protestant Establishments, richly endowed, and Ministers and Instructors well and sufficiently compensated? Is there not to be found in them Repository after Repository of Protestant Bibles, which

are distributed wheresoever they are required? And do we not know that besides the rich grants and donations made by religious Societies, and the Legislative assembly at the Capitol, a seventh part of the land of Canada is appropriated to the maintenance of the Protestant clergy? And do not the very same journals which publish this Report make it a boast, that the greatest part of the landed property of the Provinces, as well as the Commerce of the country, is in the hands of the Protestant?

And lastly, whilst there are so many Protestant Immigrant Families from the British Isles, in such spiritual destitution that "they have never heard a sermon, nor read the bible," of which it is held that the reading is necessary for the salvation of their souls, would it not be better to provide for these religious wants of "their long neglected brethren" than to import at great expense Swiss Missionaries and their mutilated French bibles to Protestantize and convert the Catholics?

THE KIRK OF SCOTLAND.

Our readers are already aware of the troubles in the Scottish Kirk, whose present condition affords unequivocal augury of speedy dissolution. The second article, of the XXVII number of the Dublin Review, in some thirty pages, presents us with a sketch of the controverted points, which, like entering wedges, are splitting to pieces this sturdy growth of Protestant vegetation, whose roots, fixed in the rocks of the highlands, and enjoying the dews, rain and sunshine dispensed by the government of Great Britain, have sustained and upheld it for near three centuries.

As long as this cherished bantling of reformation love, was humble enough to preserve, or powerful enough to command, the support of government, it could lord it at will over the consciences of men, while at the same time, it was making boast of the glorious right of private judgment and the liberty of human opinion, enjoyed by all who protest against the Catholic church. But it has been bold and foolish enough to come into direct collision with the State, whose authority created and upheld it, and it would appear that the contest will necessarily demand the death of one of the parties. Which will perish, it requires but little foresight to predict, except for those turbulent agitators, who in their eagerness for power, are at once blind to the signs of the times, and ignorant of the experience which history records.

We will endeavour from the article to which we have referred; to condense this sketch, and in brief, place the questions at issue, under the view of our readers. A learned northern Judge (Lord Gillies) in delivering his opinion upon a case, which, in point of fact, brought the Kirk and the State before the tribunal of the Law, as adverse parties, was pleased to eulogise the Kirk, "as a beautiful and solid fabric. It rests on durable—on eternal foundations." Events since this eulogy was uttered, have proved that the foundations of the Kirk, far from being "durable and eternal," are most probably resting upon the sand, and in imminent danger of crumbling to pieces, and the reviewer assures us that the learned Judge on his death-bed, late-