

only to their headquarters in France. The Grey Nuns, as they are commonly called, are also large property-owners, and their rent roll must show a handsome annual revenue. And the list might be continued with a score of similar bodies; but only an approximate estimate could be given of the extent of their possessions, for no public report is made, and it is only upon property not exclusively used for religious or educational purposes that taxes are paid.

THE CHURCH'S ADVANTAGES.

The Church in Quebec certainly has time on her side for ever since there was a settlement on the banks of the St. Lawrence she has been a power, and often a dominant one, in the Canadian community. Under French rule the Church was, in fact, established by law, and the colony knew but one religion. The Church in temporal affairs was almost equal to the State. The Bishop sat at the Council Board with the Governor and the Intendant; the priest collected his tithes by sanction of law, and every school in the colony was in the hands of the clergy. And, strange to say, conquest and a century and a third of British possession have made but little change in the essential features of these privileges. The guarantees given the French-Canadians have been more than observed to the letter; they have received a wider application than was intended by those who granted them.

THE TREATY OF PARIS.

By the treaty of Paris of 1763, Canada was ceded to the British Crown, and in that treaty the religious practices of the inhabitants were protected by a clause as follows:

"His Britannic Majesty, on his side, agrees to grant the liberty of the Catholic religion to the inhabitants of Canada. He will, consequently, give the most precise and effectual orders that his new Roman Catholic subjects may profess the worship of their religion according to the rites of the Romish Church as far as the laws of Great Britain permit."

Such was the treaty in regard to religion, but it remained for the British Parliament greatly to extend the privileges of the conquered colonies. The early British Governors set out to introduce into Canada English law and practice as prevailing in the other British colonies of North America. At that time the population of Canada numbered but 60,000, and west of Montreal there was not a settlement worth speaking of. To this people English was an unknown tongue, and English law a sealed book. The people clung to their own customs and practices, and petitioned that they be formally restored.

THE QUEBEC ACT.

In 1774 the British Parliament passed what is known as the Quebec Act, which is the great bulwark of French and Roman Catholic privileges in the Province of Quebec. This measure reaffirmed the free exercise of the religion of the Church of Rome, but it went much further. It restored to the clergy the right to "hold, receive, and enjoy their accustomed dues and rights with respect to such persons only as shall profess the said religion." French civil law in all that related to civil rights, property, and succession was restored, but at the same time English criminal law was introduced.

Firmly entrenched, the Church has since, year by year, added to the strength of her position. Political institutions have changed since then, but she adapted herself to the new conditions, always the teacher and director of her people. In 1791 Parliamentary government was given to Canada; in 1841 responsible government, through a

Cabinet; and in 1867 came the confederation of the British provinces, and old Canada became the Province of Quebec, with perfect self-government in local or provincial affairs.

LEGISLATURE.

Her Legislature, like her population, is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and for years it has been recognized that in all matters that concerned herself the Church was the power behind the throne. Such legislation as the Church desired has never been refused at Quebec, and much of it does not relate to purely ecclesiastical matters, but to the Church as a great social and political body. Strengthened on every hand by Acts scattered through the provincial statutes, she stands to-day, not where she stood at the conquest or in 1774, the Church that was tolerated, that was permitted by virtue of exceptional circumstances and exceptional arrangements, but practically the Church of the State, the religion of the people, before which all others in the province are exceptional—only tolerated.

THE TITHES AND RATES.

The effect of the exercise of these privileges, and the system that has grown up around them, if described in detail, would carry one beyond the scope of an ordinary letter; but a few general incidents will illustrate the condition of affairs. Take the tithes and rates, one of the most jealously guarded privileges, sanctioned, it will be remembered, by the Imperial Act of 1774. The tithes made the living of the parish priest practically secure, for upon the grain crops of his parishioners he has a preferred claim to the extent of an average of one-fourteenth of the yield. Every autumn the tithes are delivered at the cure's granary, which is running over with the best of grain. When farmers are short of seed in the spring it is a common practice to purchase from the priest, because it is well known that his stock is the very best produce in the parish.

Besides this, they have all the other means of raising a revenue, which, to a large extent, are common to ecclesiastical authorities the world over. When a church or a priest's residence is to be built or repaired, or a burial ground provided or restored, then the Church authorities resort to another well-recognized right, sanctioned by law and practice. Every Catholic property in the parish is assessed for its share of the proposed work, just as the property of ratepayers is assessed by municipal authorities for the construction of roads and bridges, or the building of a schoolhouse. These Church rates are not only collectable by law, but they are a privileged claim upon the real estate, and, unlike ordinary mortgages, do not require registration. Should a Protestant acquire such property, the Church's claim must be paid in full. This accounts for the large, beautiful church buildings one sees in passing through the country districts. Practically, the people must build them whether they will or not, and the Church rates are to many a French-Canadian farmer the heaviest burden he has to bear.

JUDICIAL SALES.

This Church is also recognized by law in another positive manner. Provincial statutes provide that official notices of judicial sales are to be posted at the door of the parish church, and that always means the Roman Catholic church, wherever one exists within the parish, although the majority of ratepayers in the parish may be Protestant, as is often the case in the English counties.

THE CREATION OF PARISHES.

The manner, too, in which parishes have been created, shows the trend of affairs in Quebec during the last fifteen