

## THE FRENCH PROBLEM.

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Quebec, the oldest Province of the Dominion, one of the fairest jewels of Confederation, possessed of great natural resources, colonized by hardy pioneers from the rural populations of France, inhabited by an intelligent, thrifty and industrious people, is, nevertheless, behind her sister provinces in all matters pertaining to agriculture, manufacture, wealth, education, public morals and religious freedom. Why so? Why is it that Quebec is not only behind the times, but that she is "at a standstill," as an eminent Frenchman judiciously remarked when visiting this country a few years ago? It is undoubtedly because of the ecclesiastical thralldom into which her people have been brought and in which they are sedulously taught to find their happiness.

How can this people be put into possession of all that is best in education, morals and religion? How can they be taught to assert, to win, and to use their freedom, so as to work out their own and their country's salvation, with all their intellectual and spiritual powers so long kept in bondage? That is the question. That is the French problem, which, in its last analysis, is a religious problem. The pure Gospel is its solvent, and the question is related to us as a missionary question.

### OUR CHURCH AND THE FRENCH PROBLEM.

Our Church has been working at the solution of the French problem for the past twenty-five years. Her constant aim has been to give the pure Gospel to the French people in the firm belief that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that through its message the French people can be saved.

The spirit which animates the Church and her laborers is a Christian spirit, the spirit of love, a spirit which gives utterance to the Christly sentiment: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

The Church, through her workers, does not address herself to the French people in a spirit of strife, but in a spirit of goodwill, as Moses said to Hobab: "Come thou with us and we will do thee good." Her con-

quests are those of peace; they are not for herself, but for the Kingdom at large. The sectarian spirit is quite subordinate. It is the broad Christian spirit which predominates.

The Church's method in this work consists of preaching the Word, distributing it from house to house, and teaching, a method which may be described as thoroughly Evangelical. In the mission hall, in the school, by the way-side, everywhere, the Word of God is given the first place. At all times the people are urged to believe the Gospel.

### ON "PROSELYTIZING"

Here arises a question, which, to not a few, is a stumbling-block. There are some good men in our Church who hold that French Evangelization is a work of proselytism, and they have strong objections to making proselytes. They say that the beliefs of the French Canadian Roman Catholics should not be interfered with; and they not only refuse to help in this work, but they discountenance it with all the influence at their command. Those who hold such views are sometimes quoted in high places as men of broad sympathies, animated by a tolerant spirit, while those who countenance the work and are engaged in it are often set down as narrow minded and bigoted.

Now we must take issue with these honest, but mistaken, broad-minded Christians. Let us suppose, for the moment, that the Board of French Evangelization were aiming at making proselytes of the French-Canadians, where would be the harm? Since when has it become a crime for men to spread their honest beliefs? The fair propaganda of scientific and political views, is not, as far as we know, looked upon with discredit. Galileo occupies an honoured place among the heroes and the martyrs of science, although he taught views which contradicted universal beliefs. Why, then, should it be wrong to invite men to share religious beliefs which affect not a view of this world only, but of the world to come as well? Why should it be thought unworthy of Christians to seek to deliver those who are in bondage to the fear of purgatory and of the thunders of a powerful hierarchy? Were Luther, Calvin, and Knox justified in their work of reformation? If they were justified,