

REPORT OF THE REVEREND E. LAPELLETRE,

OF HIS TOUR AMONG THE FRENCH ACADIAN AND OTHERS INHABITING THE DISTRICT OF GASPÉ AND THE NORTH COAST OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

As may be seen by my preceding Report, the people settled in the District of Gaspé have every reason to thank and to bless the name of their bountiful Creator for His numerous and wonderful benefits. But, I am sorry to add, all are not grateful; they do not all enjoy those benefits to their full extent. I have found the Scotch Protestants, as I have already shown, mostly without the ordinances of the Gospel. The Jersey and Guernsey people, who are also Protestants, are entirely or almost overlooked by every section of the Protestant churches; and we may easily conceive that the consequences of such a condition cannot but be detrimental to sound morals and good habits. I have found the French Acadians, who form a large majority of those residing along the coast of the Bay of Chaleur and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, generally ignorant, superstitious, and fanatical in the extreme, believing that they do service to God, even in persecuting those who desire to worship Him in spirit and in truth. None of them are Protestants, as I had been previously led to believe they were. The only French Huguenot that I have found among them is an old man, a native of Normandy, in France, who has been settled in this District for forty-five years, and whose wife and children are Roman Catholics. In a conversation that I had with him, that venerable old man told me that his grandfather had been a Presbyterian Minister in France in the time of the great persecutions in that country against the Protestants; and that after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, his ancestors had been obliged to leave their own country; but that afterwards, by some bountiful dispensation of Providence, they had succeeded in returning again to their ruined homes. This statement led me to quote to him the beginning of the 12th chapter of Hebrews:—"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," &c. I observed to him that as his ancestors had despised their own lives rather than forsake Jesus Christ, and invoke saints and angels, who cannot be everywhere present, and who cannot, therefore, hear the requests of those who address them, I expected that he would be able to follow their noble example, and die in the full hope of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. His answer was, that this was now his only desire.

Although this was the only Huguenot that I found in the District of Gaspé, and although I did not meet with one among the French Acadians on the north

coast of New Brunswick, in spite of my earnest and repeated enquiries, I am still of opinion that the Huguenots were at one time pretty numerous in this quarter. I visited a place on the Canada side of the River Restigouche, where once stood a tower called *La Petite Rochelle*, "which," says Gesner, in his Topographical History of New Brunswick, in which he makes much mention of the French Acadians, "contained from four to five thousand people, when it was bombarded and rased to the ground by an English force, and the people scattered or destroyed." The great probability is that the inhabitants were French Protestants, and what induced them very likely to call this fortified and rising town by the name of *La Rochelle*, which was the stronghold of Protestantism in France, was the expectation that this town would also become the stronghold of Protestantism in Acadia. This opinion is confirmed by the following quotation from the above-mentioned author:—"During the reign of Henry IV. King of France, who before his coronation was a Protestant, and remained a Protestant at heart afterwards, a gentleman, or rather a nobleman, named De Monts, under very favourable auspices, made an attempt at colonisation. He received from his sovereign almost unlimited powers and privileges, and every encouragement to pursue his arduous undertaking. De Monts had accompanied Chauvin up the St. Lawrence, and had made himself acquainted with a part of the Atlantic coast. His commission embraced all the territory from the 40th to the 46th degree north latitude, or from Hudson's Bay to Virginia; and he had the monopoly of the fur-trade over that vast tract of country, which was then called New France. The colony was to be established at the expense of individuals, who cheerfully devoted their money to the popular enterprise. De Monts was a Protestant, and obtained permission for the free exercise of his religion in the country, on the condition of providing for Roman Catholic Missionaries for the conversion of natives." I have read somewhere else, that De Monts emigrated with the intention of forming a Protestant colony in this then New World, and thus providing for them a retreat where they would no longer experience the persecutions of the Romish priesthood, and where the wounds inflicted by the still recent and ever-memorable day of St. Bartholomew might be healed up. The permission which was granted him, not only to have the monopoly of the trade over that vast tract of country then called New France, but also to enjoy the free exercise of his religion, sufficiently shows that the intention of De Monts was to procure a peaceful home for his fellow religionists, since he did not forget to make it a clause of his commission, "that he and his followers

would be allowed to enjoy the free exercise of their religion." This privilege is a memorial of De Monts' zeal for the glory of God, and of the favorable disposition of King Henry IV. towards him and towards Christian Protestantism; for in those times it was almost as great a thing to get and as difficult to bestow such a benefit, as to give the half of the kingdom of France. And the great concession which De Monts was obliged to make, "to provide for Roman Catholic Missionaries for the conversion of natives," proves that the enemies of the persecuted Protestants were not indifferent to this munificent and royal grant. It was, in short, like the triumph of Mordecai over Haman. But, alas! this triumph has proved but of short duration. The wars of England with France on this continent greatly paralyzed the efforts of De Monts; the revocation of the Edict of Nantes gave the death-blow to all the privileges, grants and commissions bestowed on the French Protestants; and now, there is not even a single Acadian who knows whether his forefathers were Protestants or not, although, most probably, such was the case with many.

In New Brunswick I preached and held prayer meetings in the following places:—Belle-Dune, once in English; Bathurst, four times in English; Chatham, three times in English; Douglstown, once in English; New-Castle, once in English; Tabusintac, once in English, besides an address in French; Tracadie, once in French; Shippagan, once in English and an address; Carquette, once in English; Grand Anse, once in French. My visit to New Brunswick has been of great service to me in my missionary work, and also, as I have reason to hope, to the cause of the Gospel in that part of the Province through which I passed. The Synod of New Brunswick happening to meet during my stay in Douglstown, I was invited to attend thereat, and was received in the most friendly manner.

During my stay in New Brunswick, I obtained very good collections for the building fund of the French Mission of Montreal, considering the dullness of the times. And here I must state, that I do not remember ever to have lost one single day in employing a portion of my time to make collections; but, on the contrary, I feel that I have been so directed by a kind Providence, that I am persuaded I could not devise a better plan nor divide my time better than it has been. For, every time that I preached in New Brunswick, I did not only get pecuniary aid towards our Missionary work in Canada, but I got also very important information respecting the French Acadians, which has been of the greatest importance to me already, and I got from the Bible Society of that Province (New Brunswick) the services of their colporteur,