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A CANADIAN VISITOR.

THE VICAR-APOSTOLIC OF ATHABASCA-MACKENZIE.

Sketch of the Life of Bishop Grouard—His Diocese in the Northwest—Missionary Experience of the Oblates—Growth of Catholicity at the Klondike.

Catholic Transcript (Hartford).

A recent distinguished visitor to New England—though this is not by any means the first time that he has honored our section of the country with his genial presence—was Right Rev. Emile Grouard, O. M. I., titular bishop of Iborra, and vicar-apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie, in the Canadian Northwest Territory. Mgr. Grouard lately visited Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In the former State he was the guest of several of the French-Canadian-American pastors in the Providence diocese, and at Boston he stayed for a few days at the House of the Angel Guardian, which is conducted by the Brothers of Charity.

Bishop Grouard has worn a mitre since August 1, 1891, but for many years before that he labored in the Canadian Northwest, and he was, just before his promotion to the purple, the superior of the Oblate community at Lake La Biche. He succeeded Mgr. Faraud, also an Oblate, in the vicariate over which he now presides, and he is assisted in his labors by Bishop Clut, also an Oblate, who, because of his frequent trips into Arctic regions, has been called the Bishop of the North Pole. The vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie runs from the diocese of St. Albert to the Arctic Ocean. On east of it lies the Vicariate of the Saskatchewan, and on the west the diocese of New Westminster and our territory of Alaska. It will be readily remembered that last year Mgr. Grouard, in response to the urgent invitation of the American Jesuits laboring in Alaska, who had followed the gold hunters across the border, in order to attend to their spiritual needs, consented to send some of his diocesan priests to the Klondike, to relieve the Jesuits and permit them to return to their own missions on the American side of the line. All the priests in the vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie are Oblates. For that matter all the adjacent dioceses and vicariates are Oblate missions. In fact the whole province of St. Boniface may be said to be the same; and the history of the entrance of the Oblates into this vast field, where they have accomplished so much good, is a highly interesting one.

All the Canadian Northwest was once included in the Quebec diocese, and it remained so situated until 1844 when the districts known as Hudson's Bay and Northwest Territories were made a vicariate and entrusted to the care of Right Rev. J. N. Provencher, who had for a quarter of a century been a missionary in the Red River region, and who had, moreover, some years before the erection of this vicar-

iate been consecrated titular bishop of Juliopolis, to be coadjutor to the Archbishop of Quebec. His vicariate was then defined as stretching from the 49th degree of latitude to the Polar Sea, and it ran westward from Hudson's Bay to the headquarters of the rivers which, flowing easterly, empty thereinto. As soon as he fixed his residence at St. Boniface, which was then but a trading post, Mgr. Provencher be thought himself of the zealous Oblates, who had establishments at Quebec, Montreal and Three Rivers, and he straightway sent them an invitation to come into the Canadian Northwest and share his toils with him. The invitation was duly accepted, and in a short while Mgr. Provencher had the happiness of welcoming to St. Boniface the first sons of Mgr. Mazenod to enter that region.

One of the first band of Oblates to enter this vast Canadian missionary field was a young ecclesiastic who was destined to succeed Mgr. Provencher and to become the first archbishop of St. Boniface. That youth was Alexandre Antonin Taché, who started for St. Boniface in company with Very Rev. Father Aubert, the vicar-general of Mgr. Provencher, who had gone down to the Province of Quebec to bring to St. Boniface some Grey Nuns, volunteers for the missions. It took the little party 62 days to go from Montreal to St. Boniface. "When they left the St. Lawrence," says one account of their voyage, "the little band of apostles wended their way by the Ottawa, Mattawan and Des Vases rivers, crossing Lake Nipissing. French River brought them to Lake Huron, thence to Lake Superior and the Kamistiquia River. As they passed Lac de la Croix the painful memories connected with the spot came crowding upon them. Upon one of the islands a party of voyageurs were massacred by the Sioux in 1736, and Père Auneau, one of the first missionaries to the west, was killed with his companions. They breathed a feverish prayer as they went that this apostle might obtain for them the spirit of zeal. Still onwards, past Laplaue River and Lake, through the Lac des Bois and Winnipeg River till at last the Red River was reached. On its banks Père Aubert said mass, and the canoe went on, disclosing to the wearied eyes of the exiles the little dwellings of the colonists. They were in the Assiniboine country. On the feast of St. Louis the canoe landed before the Cathedral of St. Boniface. The aged Bishop Provencher came down to meet them with the liveliest joy."

Mgr. Taché was but a sub-deacon when he made his first voyage to St. Boniface, but so great was the need of priests in the vicariate Mgr. Provencher advanced him at once to deaconship and priesthood. He was the first Oblate to make his sacerdotal pledges in a district which has since seen many similar occurrences. He was at once sent to the mission of Isle à la Crosse, one of the most lonely and distant spots in the vicariate. In 1851 he was recalled to St. Boniface, to be consecrated the coadjutor of Mgr. Provencher. Then, at that prelate's suggestion, he went to France to ask the Oblates there to send more missionaries into the Canadian Northwest. From France, after securing what he sought,

he went to Rome. Pius IX. had erected a see at St. Boniface, in 1847, and Mgr. Provencher having in the meantime passed away from earth, Mgr. Taché succeeded him as the second bishop of the new see. On Nov. 30, 1859, Right Rev. Vitalis J. Grandin, now bishop of the diocese of St. Albert, and an Oblate, was made his auxiliary. In 1871 St. Boniface became an archbishopric, and then it was that the see of St. Albert was erected. Since that time another diocese has been erected at New Westminster, and in addition to the vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie there is another vicariate, that of the Saskatchewan, in the province. All these districts have Oblates as bishops or vicars-apostolic, and practically all the priests in the missions up there are Oblates, too. In Mgr. Grouard's vicariate all the missionaries are Oblates. He himself resides at Athabaska Lake, and the Catholics in his jurisdiction—not counting those who have of recent years gone to the Klondike—number about 8,000 souls. There are 30 missionaries in the vicariate and their work is of the most exacting and laborious sort. The mission in which the bishop is at times compelled to make his parochial visitations was described a few years ago by Mgr. Grouard himself. Speaking of a trip which he made to several outlying missions, the vicar-apostolic said: "When snow covers the earth, and lakes and rivers are fast bound in their icy fetters, it is impossible to go on a journey, either to visit the encampments of the Indians or the sick, or to go fishing or any other errand, without the assistance of dogs. These animals are harnessed four in a line (not one pair in front of another), and on two thin planks which they draw, and which slide flat over the snow, one end being slightly bent upwards, are packed and firmly tied up in a skin, beds, provisions and all necessary baggage. For each day's evening meal the dogs are given one or two fishes which are thawed for them. They slake their thirst with the snow, of which they can swallow as much as they please. Towards their masters they are good tempered and gentle enough, but, as in other lands, they are excitable and often quarrel with each other. Although not generally dishonest they are not above all suspicion of theft and petty larceny. It does occasionally happen that they try noses and teeth on our provision bags while we are asleep. To circumvent them the sack is generally placed quite close to the sleeper's pillow, and across it is laid the dog's harness, which, being adorned with little bells, would, if disturbed, suffice to arouse the master."

For a prelate who at home is often forced to resort to that sort of travelling in order to visit the various missions of his vicariate, it must indeed be a pleasant change to get back once in a while to civilization and sit in a swiftly and smoothly moving railway train or to ride in a trolley car. Mgr. Grouard has been so long engaged in missionary life in the northwest, though, that he probably feels more at home in that icy region than here in the United States or in Canada, where he frequently visits his Oblate brethren. The amount of good he and his brother religious have accomplished in the Canadian Northwest can-

not well be told. His coadjutor, Mgr. Clut, O. M. I., is believed to have been the first Catholic prelate to have traversed the regions where, in the Klondike, the recent gold discoveries have been made. Mgr. Clut passed through those districts over 30 years ago now, and he was then attended by Rev. Father Lecomte, O. M. I., who is still living and doing duty, at the Providence mission, in Bishop Grouard's vicariate.

WANTED A DEFINITION OF PROTESTANTISM.

"Canon McColl is quoted in 'The Living Church' (Protestant Episcopal, Chicago) as wishing that somebody would give him a definition of Protestantism. He said:

In common parlance, a Protestant means anybody who is not a Roman Catholic, and Protestantism is thus a sort of drag-net that "gathers fish of every kind," from the believer in the Trinity and Incarnation to the Mormon and the Agnostic, and even the avowed atheist. What, then, is "the Protestant faith" of which we hear so much? It is a contradiction in terms. The note of faith is "I believe." The note of Protestantism is "I do not believe." It is a negative term, and therefore to call the Church of England "Protestant" is much the same thing as to define a human being as "not a quadruped." My loyalty to the Church of England is too genuine to let me accept for her specific connotation an adjective which surrenders the whole field of controversy to the Church of Rome. There is, of course, a sense in which every church is Protestant, for every church protests against some errors. But institutions which have life, and and institution in particular which claims to be divinely founded, must be defined by their positive qualities, not by their accidental negations; by the truths which they profess, not by the errors which they deny. And therefore the Church of England puts the creed of Christendom into the mouths of all her members, and enjoins them to believe in "One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church."

And yet nobody outside of the Church of England ever dreams of calling her aught else than a Protestant establishment.

A NEW ERA IN IRELAND.

Catholic Transcript (Hartford).

The recent elections in Ireland have been a sweeping victory for the Irish National Party. As a result the government of the 32 counties has been transferred from the landlords and the Unionists to the peasant proprietors. Hitherto the governing party in Ireland has been alien. They were for the most part landlords who spent the greater portion of their time and money in England and who were English in sympathy and opposed to anything which would savor of a government that would be by the Irish or for the Irish. The Unionist minority which was mostly Protestant has been for a long period the governing power and the Irish peasantry which

constituted the Catholic majority were the governed. But the elections held last week effected a revolution which has overturned these heretofore existing conditions, and can be justly regarded as instituting a new era in Ireland.

The change which is of so great national importance was accomplished with a remarkable absence of excitement. There were no disturbances to reflect discredit on the victors. In fact very little interest was aroused even in England over the elections, although it was evident a month in advance that a radical change would be effected in the government of Ireland. The National party set out to accomplish its purposes quietly, and undoubtedly the peaceful plan that was adopted by the leaders did much to prevent an opposition movement among the English. Had the matter been agitated abroad and an endeavor made to arouse public opinion among the Irish in America, greater opposition would also have arisen from the enemies of Irish home rule. The wisdom of the Nationalist leaders has been attended with success that is beyond anything that was expected.

So peaceably has this political change been accomplished that many will be surprised to know that it is the most important measure effected in Ireland since the Union. And their surprise is not without reason, for in the political history of the world changes of so vital an importance have been effected only after considerable agitation and with much excitement and national alarm. The investiture of the local government of Ireland in those who may be considered the sons of the soil, is the most noteworthy political measure that has ever been achieved by peaceful methods in any country of the world. A new chapter has now been begun in Irish history whose close may be marked by the acquisition of home rule. Heretofore the British Parliament's strongest motive for refusing to Ireland the same privileges in national government which have been granted to Canada was the lack of conservatism and stability which would be found in a country where landed proprietorship was not universal. But this ground for objection to home rule is fast being removed by the increasing proportion of land owners among the Irish peasantry. This steady increase in proprietorship and the recent victory of the Nationalist party at the polls are heralds of a dawning day of brightness for Ireland.

Miss Maria Cinq-Mars, of St. Boniface, left last Thursday for Wild Rice, N. D., where she will be assistant teacher in a school composed exclusively of French Canadian children.

The commissioners appointed to go to Lesser Slave Lake, Peace River Landing, Fort St. John, Fort Smith on Great Slave River, Fort McMurray on the Athabasca River and other places, to treat with the Indians and half-breeds for the extinguishment of their title, are Hon. David Laird, Indian commissioner; Hon. Jas. H. Ross, minister of public works, N. W. T.; and J. A. J. McKenna, of the Indian department, Ottawa. They will begin business at Edmonton about the 24th of May.