

The Church in Canada.

Under this heading will be collected and preserved all obtainable data bearing upon the history and growth of the Church in Canada. Contributions are invited from those having in their possession any material that might properly come for publication in this department.

HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ST. THOMAS.

I.

The first Catholic clergyman who officiated in St. Thomas was a distinguished man, Right Rev. Alexander Macdonell, Bishop of Kingston. His Lordship came to the village at the request of Colonel Talbot, who happened to meet the Bishop in Toronto in July, 1827. The Colonel was then acting as commissioner under the British Government for the allotment and distribution of lands in South Western Ontario, and was aware of the presence of many Roman Catholics in the townships of Dunwich and Southwold. He represented to Bishop Macdonell that the Catholics inhabiting those townships were numerous, and had been for years deprived of the advantages of religious worship and ministration of the sacraments. Colonel Talbot was a member of the Episcopal Church, yet he showed every mark of respect and veneration for the Roman Catholic dignitary who came at his request from Toronto, and entertained His Lordship at his home by the lake at Port Talbot. As a result of the Episcopal visit Rev. James W. Campion, at that time stationed in Dundas, was directed to visit St. Thomas and London twice a year. He was succeeded in 1829 by Rev. John Cullen, who came to St. Thomas and London four times each year. This clergyman obtained as a gift from Archibald McNeil, an old settler, three acres of land in the east end of the village of St. Thomas, the site of the present Roman Catholic Church and school, now facing on Talbot street. The land was conveyed by deed to Right Rev. Alex. Macdonell and Rev. Father Cullen jointly, for the consideration of five shillings sterling, to be held and used for a Catholic Church and burying ground. The first Church was built in 1830, and was a small frame structure, which was afterwards moved to the back of the lot, close to the railroad track, and was used as a school-house until the present school building was erected. A few years ago it was burnt down, after it had fallen into disuse and decay. It was called St. George's Church, and was known by that name until the present Church was built, when it was re-named the Church of the Holy Angels. Father Cullen was succeeded in 1831 by Rev. Daniel Downie, who had charge of St. Thomas, London, Adelaide, Goderich and intervening stations until 1836. Rev. J. M. Burke then took charge, and remained till 1838, when he resigned the mission on being transferred to St. Catharines, Niagara district, and was succeeded by Rev. Michael Robert Mills. Rev. James O'Flynn was appointed pastor in 1839, and remained until 1842. Rev. P. O'Dwyer remained one year in this district, when Father Mills was again brought back under Bishop Power, and remained until 1848. After his retirement to a monastery, he was succeeded by Rev. T. Kirwan, who lived in London and visited St. Thomas once every month. Rev. T. D. Ryan was appointed parish priest here in 1850, and resided here seven years. He built the house on Talbot street now occupied by Rev. Father Flannery. He also purchased a temperance hall in Port Stanley, which has been used as a church since that time. He was succeeded in turn by Rev. Fathers Frachon, Bissey and Leucher. The latter remained here nine years, and was succeeded in October, 1870, by the present incumbent, Rev. W. Flannery. Among the most ancient records of the parish we find the names of some who have passed away to a better land, whose descendants are still amongst us, and others who have left no representatives, whose children no doubt emigrated to the Far West. Thus in 1831 the churchwardens were: Richard Fitzgerald, Hugh O'Beirne and Patrick Bobier. On the 23rd November, 1834, the under-mentioned were elected churchwardens:—Richard Fitzgerald

and Hugh O'Beirne, senior wardens, retired; Patrick Bobier, Maurice Healy and John Brady; associates, Patrick Burns, Hugh McCann, Laurence Doyle, Archibald McNeil John St. Etienne (Sapnagan), Michael Murphy, and John Carbery. We find also on the records in the handwriting of Rev. J. M. Burke, that on Sunday, the 2nd October, 1836, the undersigned were elected to discharge the duties of churchwardens; Patrick Bobier, John Kirby, wardens; John Westlake and Hugh O'Beirne, associates. The first subscription list is dated, 21st October, 1836, and states that: "We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, do bind ourselves to pay annually, in quarterly payments, the several sums set opposite our names to the Rev. J. M. Burke, missionary apostolic, being our stipend as his support, as witness our hand in the church of St. George, in the London district, this first day of October, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six: Hugh O'Beirne, £4; John Westlake, £3; Luke Sweetman, £2; Michael Hampton, £1; John St. Etienne, 10s.; John Lee, 15s.; Laurence Doyle, £2; Denis Kavanagh, £1; James Finlan, £1 10s.; Patrick Burn, £1; John McNeal, £1; James Briody, £1; Daniel Coughlin, £1; Denis Regan, £3; Patrick Bobier, £1; etc. Amounting in all to £50 16s. 3d."

(Conclusion next week.)

MGR. DE SEGUR.

A SAINT AT TEN.

(From the French. For THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY REVIEW.) By F. B. H.
Letters from Mgr. De Segur to a young boy, René D— and to his mother.—The child was gifted with precocious piety and intelligence, and died a holy death at the age of 10 years, after over a year of cruel sufferings heroically endured.—What Mgr. De Segur was for him and his, that he was for many others in every class in society.

PARIS, 9th Aug., 1858.

MY DEAR LITTLE RENÉ,—This letter will reach you, no doubt, on the anniversary of your first communion and of your miraculous recovery. I will say mass for you on that day, and will pray that our Lord may crown His mercies by leaving you in our midst for many years to come, so that you may serve Him longer and win, by faithful and constant love, a brighter crown in heaven. I would not pray for this if I feared you would become bad, like so many others. Life is a grace and a blessing only when it is Christian, pure and holy. But you have already been so loaded with graces and your good parents watch so lovingly over your soul, that I have no doubt as to your faithful perseverance in the service of God.

I was unable to answer you sooner, because my time was wholly taken up with business. Not only do I approve of your communion of the 12th, but, moreover, if you promise our good Lord and your mamma to be very good, very meek, very patient and very recollected, I counsel you to ask leave to communicate on the 15th, in honour of the Blessed Virgin. Thus you will have a double festival and a double blessing. Across the distance which separates us, and which in our good God's eyes does not exist, I give you, my dear little child, the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ; I embrace you with all my heart, and beg you to remember me to your good father and mother and to your sister.

PARIS, 27th October, 1858.

MY DEAR LITTLE RENÉ,—All Saints' day is approaching. I write these few words to remind you that you must, while passing through Paris, come to me, so that you may approach the Sacraments and thus imbibe from the heart of our good Lord the patience, meekness and love which you need in order that you may suffer in a holy manner. Do not complain of your fate, my dear little child; you are upon the cross with Jesus, and the cross is the tree of eternal life. It is, in truth, hard and wearisome to suffer; but suffering passes and the reward remains.

I embrace you with all my heart and hope for your speedy return. May God bless you, my dear child, and may He fill your heart with His holy joy.