

PROGRESS OF CATHOLICITY IN CANADA.



THE tree of Canadian Catholicity, whose seed was first planted by the early Recollets and Jesuit fathers, whose growth was blessed by the sainted Laval: the tree for which a Brebœuf and a Lalumant, following the footsteps of their Heavenly Master, shed the last drop of their martyred blood; the tree under whose spreading branches so many fearless soldiers of Christ fought and died: the tree whose increase and progress, probably no other country can equal, that tree indeed is worthy of the veneration of every true Canadian, and its history should hold no mean place in the annals of our country.

Confined in its early history to the fertile soil of Quebec, its branches continually multiplied and its falling seeds were slowly yet steadily borne to every point of the Dominion, until to-day each province boasts, and proudly too, of its Catholic Churches, Catholic educational institutions, Catholic clergy, Catholic statesmen and its Catholic representatives in every trade, business and profession.

A glimpse at our past and a word regarding our present position, with a fair view of ourselves in Protestant Ontario, will form the matter for our present essay.

History tells us, that, left in the hands of a few worldly, profit seeking adventurers, slow indeed would have been the growth of Christianity, in the land first sighted by Cartier, in 1534, had it not been for the endless entreaties of a few self-sacrificing missionaries. The governors and their minions, all absorbed in the fur trade, thought little and cared less about the souls of the poor heathen Indian so long as each season added more to their ever-increasing, ill-gotten gains. Time and again was the scum of Paris and other cities sent out to people the colony: year after year, in search of liberty from the "galleys," came crime laden prisoners to build up a colony in the newly discovered

North. But dissatisfaction, discontent and laziness soon compelled them to relinquish their labors and in time they sought to enrich themselves either by plundering the Indians of their winter's earnings or by following the pursuits of the Indians themselves.

Thus went things from bad to worse until the Church, ever mindful of her duties towards civilization and Christianity, sought to rescue from the fangs of paganism, the poor American tribes, and to bring the consolation of religion to the then exiled sons of France.

With this intent, in the year 1615, four priests of the order of Recollets, became residents of New France. These are the first mentioned in history as being permanently stationed in Canada: but with the advance of the colony more Recollets followed, and then came the much-abused Jesuits. Quebec, Three Rivers and Tadoussac, were the stations that witnessed the first Catholic services in Canada. About the year 1617 the first Catholic Church was erected at Quebec; to this church a monastery for the priests was attached. Recollets and Jesuits were employed at the stations mentioned. These same fathers engaged in missionary work among the Indians. Thus were laid the foundations of Catholicity in Canada.

Although we charged the authorities of that period with seeking more after personal gain than after the welfare of the church and colony, there is one to whom no such charge can be imputed. Champlain, notwithstanding the fact that a few modern writers would claim him as other than Catholic, was ever ready to serve the few heroic priests and ever active in the advancement of the Catholic religion and doctrine.

In 1625 a band of Jesuits sailed over to assist in the blessed work of converting the savages. With these holy men came the future martyrs, Lalumant and Brebœuf. Now indeed the Word of God began to extend from the shores of the St. Lawrence, along the waters of the