

GLIMPSES OF FRENCH WORK.

Two ideas predominate in the work of French Evangelization, and both of these must commend themselves to Protestants.

One, the chief, idea, is to give the Word of God to our French fellow countrymen who have it not. The first aim is not to make proselytes or Protestants; but to give them the word of God in their own tongue. Let that bring the light to them, and them to the light, and then let them choose the name of their faith.

Another thought, which touches in many a responsive chord, is that a great many people in Quebec, who are now French speaking Roman Catholics, are descended from Scotch Protestants, disbanded soldiers, who settled there many years ago, but became gradually absorbed by the French; and to win our fellow clansmen back, appeals to many a Scottish heart.

From the Chicoutimi Mission, at the head of the Saguenay River, the missionary writes:

The history of the field is a most interesting one, showing as it does the nature of the work which is being carried on among the French. Results, also show that the work is as encouraging as interesting.

For many years before I was sent there as a missionary, this large district of the Lake St. John had been left entirely unsupplied, and much was lost to Protestantism through this neglect.

The small Protestant community settled there, finding themselves deserted by their church and surrounded on all sides by Roman Catholics, naturally drifted towards the Roman Church.

Some twenty-five of those once Protestants had thus given up their faith before I came to the field. These people were all of Scotch descent—the names such as Harvey, McKenzie, and Blackburn, indicate clearly that their fathers belonged to the Scotch regiments disbanded in lower Canada at the conquest. During the last two years I have been so fortunate as to bring back six of these people to the Protestant faith."

Another Missionary writes:—

"The Montreal district is a new one to us. I was the first Presbyterian to preach at Lake Edward, and at Chambord. One woman I visited had not seen a missionary for fifty-four years.

Many of the people read the Bible and declare they are not Roman Catholics; but they hesitate yet to become Protestants. They are, however, anxious to be taught, and they are thinking, too.

One little girl said to me: "Why do the priests forbid us to read the Bible? I am anxious to read it, for I want to know the truth. I believe one must be born again before one can see the Kingdom of God." She showed her earnestness by attending all our services.

Seven new members joined the Church last summer, six of whom took the communion for the first time.

They expressed the earnest hope that they might have a missionary sent them again next summer. My own hope is no less fervent.

From Cacouna, Que., the laborer reports:—

"On reaching my field I at once took up the work begun the year before. All through May and June I taught the people in the evenings, explaining the Scriptures and distributing Bibles among them.

I gave out during the summer ten Bibles, twenty-four new Testaments and fifty tracts. The people read them eagerly and came to me at all hours to have me explain them.

It is pitiful to note their ignorance and superstition, and to learn the false views of Protestantism taught them by their priests. Most of them regard us as infidels and will not hear us quietly; with a few it is different.

Two men were impressed by what I taught them and refused to go to confession; at this the wife of one of them went to the priest in great distress, asking him to speak to her husband.

He did so, and at the same time charged him to come and confess. The man replied that confession was not a divine institution, and he preferred to follow the Bible rather than the commands of the Church. He went on, too, to contrast the doctrine of the Bible with the penance and fear preached by the cure.

The other man who refused confession invited me to his house, and there I talked to him and his wife a whole afternoon. They were both very grateful, and the woman invited me back, despite the suggestion of a neighbour, who thought I ought to be driven off with a broom.

It is harder to reach the women than the men; where there are old women it is impossible to do anything, for they always receive us with bursts of anger. Then they talk freely, and are bitter in their complaints against the priests, but in public they are silent. Some who dared not come to me visited the lonely house of one of their number who had become a Protestant. The day breaks, for they rejoice secretly in the Scriptures, and the time is not far off when they will confess Christ openly.

Four children from this district have gone to Pointe-aux-Trembles School, and others would have gone had they not been prevented.

I visited St. Cyprian, where I had been two years before, and was pleased to find that since then the people had been reading the Gospel and discussing it. They questioned me eagerly about many things, and said they wished to build a Church. One agreed to saw the timber as his share in the work. Though they don't attend the Roman Catholic Church they are unwilling to break openly with it until they feel themselves strong enough to call a Protestant minister.