

farmers, traders, druggists, doctors, lawyers, ministers, professors. Scattered throughout the land, they are standing among their fellow-countrymen as so many interrogation marks; for every time that a French Protestant comes in contact with his fellows, the question is asked: Why are you a Protestant? Why have you shaken off the yoke? When and how did you obtain your freedom? And as a rule, the convert is not slow to testify to the saving power of the Gospel. For if there is one characteristic of our converts more marked than any other, it is this readiness always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. This readiness to confess Christ before men, to preach the Word, to be instant in season, out of season, is very gratifying. It takes hold of every opening to testify to the truth. Thus every convert becomes a co-worker with his pastor, a shining light amidst the surrounding darkness, a willing missionary to his own people.

The particular results of our work have begotten general results. There is a spirit of toleration abroad in this Province. Our converts are no longer openly persecuted. There are still occult influences at work, the source of which is pretty well known, but open, popular persecution is getting to be a thing of the past.

This spirit of toleration, the disappearance of fanaticism, the loosening of the priest's grip on the exercise of the franchise, the demand for better schools, the broadening of the mental vision—these are important results, bearing on the national life of the Province and of the Dominion, and for which we claim some credit. And the presence of this reaction among the people bodes well for the future.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE.

The future—what of it, may be asked. Will the French people forsake the church of their fathers in a body? Will there be large accessions to our ranks, and that speedily? We do not believe that such will be the case. The Roman Catholic Church has a remarkably strong hold on the French people, and she knows it. Conscious of her strength, she is building as though she were sure that the future belongs to her.

POWER OF THE PRIESTS.

It is evident that the priests have lost some ground. The people have won their political freedom from the clergy. The majority of them have cast a free vote at the last elections, and they will likely continue to do so. But it is a long way from political to religious emancipation. Because the majority have asserted their freedom in politics, because they have relegated the priest within the church where he belongs, and where the people intend to keep him, it does not follow that they are worse Catholics for that. There are accommodations with the church, and somehow or other the Pope will find a way of giving his blessing to the Liberals without losing his dignity. In religious matters the priest continues to reign supreme, and it takes more than one bad break on the part of a priest to shake the people's confidence in him as a religious authority.

A few years ago, a priest of this diocese committed a grievous sin. There was an immediate outburst of popular indignation. The newspapers were filled with accusations against several other priests who had sinned more grievously than the notorious abbé. Priests were almost hooted on the streets of Montreal. But that passed away. The abbé was not excommunicated. He is probably exercising now his ministry of consolation somewhere, and he is still in odor of sanctity wherever he is. As far as Montreal is concerned, not one Roman Catholic forsook, on that ground, the church in which such gross abuses are tolerated. And the reason of it is that the man and the priest are two different beings. The man may be bad, a notorious profligate, but he is still a good priest. He can still absolve from sin, consecrate the host and transform it into a god. For all religious purposes he is as good a priest as the most correct and moral of prelates. It is not a matter of conduct, but of dogma. Once a priest always a priest. As long as the French people believe that, no amount of political interference and no degree of degradation on the part of their clergy will drive them in a body out of their church.

ROME AND DOGMA.

Then there is another matter which must not be lost sight of. To-day questions of