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.

THE CHURCH IN CANADA.

At the distinguished company assembled at Toronto last autumn, in honour of Archbishop Lynch, many of the readers of this Review, who were present and heard the speeches, will have remembered with what pardonable pride the venerable prelate from Quebec, Archbishop Taschereau, referred to the ancient boundaries of his diocese; to the time when his predecessors had jurisdiction, not only over the province of his host, but westward to the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi. No one better than the illustrious speaker could have depicted the time when, in Canada, a long line of bishops traced the outlines of a great cross on this Continent, at once the symbol and limits of their jurisdiction, connecting the Atlantic with the Rocky Mountains, intersected by a belt of territory extending from Hudson Bay to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. This was the diocese of Quebec, not only under the old French régime, but for many years after the cession of Canada to England in 1763—up, in fact, to the formation of the United States, some years later. The early American Church, not owing allegiance to the French or Canadian bishops, comprised what was comparatively a small strip of Atlantic seaboard, with France to the north and west, and Spain to the south.

Probably the moderation of the speaker had been somewhat suggested by the cosmopolitan character of the assembly, fearing least some representative of the Mexican Church might have arisen and asserted his claim, if not to the larger portion of the Continent, at least forestalling Quebec in priority by a good century and a quarter. Conceding this, there yet remained a respectable antiquity to Bishop Laval and his successors, and a jurisdiction of territory that now covers nearly a dozen ecclesiastical provinces.

But beyond this there are some unique things about the Church in Canada. We had a complete Church establishment prior to the cession, and we have had, since the cession, an attempted establishment, so to speak, under British law. Our bishops, in French times, were the choice of the King and the diocese, convents and colleges were established by royal patent. In early English rule since the cession, the King of England has been consulted in the choice of bishops, and the Downing Street authorities have time and again signified their disapproval or acceptance of nominees to the Episcopal See of Quebec before they were preconized at Rome. In truth, we have had the representative of the Crown trying, by every means, to force the Church under the law, so that not only the bishops, but every curé should seem to be appointed by the King's most excellent majesty. In former days, in England, a Catholic was thought to be good enough to be head of the Protestant Church; and as it was a poor rule that worked only one way, the flexibility of the constitution was thought to be sufficient to enable a Protestant King in return to become the head of the Catholic Church, at least good enough for the Church in a colony. We have had Protestants, legal luminaries amongst us, at one time, arguing that Roman Catholics in Quebec or Lower Canada had no rights whatever, as compared with the Church of England, and at another arguing that the Catholic Church is the only Church there is established by law. We have seen the one See of Quebec occupied by two titular bishops—a Catholic and and an Anglican—and the latter forced to give way. Learned judges and attorney-generals have wasted their time drafting *commissions* for Catholic bishops to be licensed as Chief Ecclesiastical Superintendents of the Church of Rome, with irremovable curés and state-erected parishes; and afterwards we have seen these officials sit, "cheek by jowl," with the self same superintendents in the legislative councils of the Province, not as superintendents, but as recognized bishops of this favoured Church. And to this day, in this same province, the parish, so erected by the Bishop, is equally as well known as is the township, or county, or ward under its municipal law, and the curé and church wardens are recognized in the public law of the land. The law apportions the tithes and its officers collect them. On the other hand there is also on record within this country, the refusal by Protestant rulers to grant Wesleyan Methodists any sort of legal recognition for their ministers, unless under a security of two hundred pounds sterling, and the appearance of seven respectable members, testifying before justices of the quarter sessions as to the genuineness of the minister in question, and the additional indignity of a violent protest against even this concession by a Protestant chief justice.*

We have had the Church of England established by law in our Province, and generally the attempted disregard everywhere of all who did not belong to that church. We have examples of a Catholic being in the position of O'Connell as to taking his seat in the Commons. We have the sad story of the Acadians, and the persecutions of religious, and by one of those curious retributions by which Providence makes a fool of people, we have a small province into which no Catholic was allowed to imigrate, numbering more Catholics than Protestants.

When we speak of Canada, some explanation must be made. Nowadays one must keep up his knowledge of geography as the political changes are so numerous that what was true of boundaries and divisions yesterday may not be to-day. Until the Dominion of Canada was created in 1867, the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada comprised what, for one hundred years, was included in the old Canadas, or in the older Province of Quebec. To-day Canada means, leaving out Newfoundland, all British territory lying north of the United States. The new Dominion of Canada dates back only a few years, beginning in 1867 with four provinces, and adding others since that date, until the present dimensions have been attained. The present constitution is the fifth or sixth change under British rule within its first century.

During all these mutations in constitutions the Church has a history that, though naturally branching out in more recent times with the increase of its children and by force of political changes, nevertheless preserved for a long time her head quarters in one ecclesiastical province having to deal entirely with the Crown of England as represented by the governors of Canada. Living in Quebec with the bishop, he seemed to represent the Crown, as did the latter the Church, for all the British provinces. The battle of the Church was fought between these two under British rule, as it was fought there under French rule. It was not until the last years of the reign of George III. that the Bishop of Quebec got his immense diocese subdivided, but the rights of his church were contested and decided long before this, though by the same heroic bishop. In 1819, Bishop Plessis, having obtained sanction in England and Rome, established Vicars-General in Upper Canada, in New Brunswick and the North-West. From that time a particular history in these places is necessary. It is to this period, within which Bishop Plessis, (he was Archbishop, but prudently declined to style himself such,) and his predecessors, as bishops of Quebec, held the Church in their own hands, that attention must mainly be directed at first. He and Bishop Laval stand at the end and beginning of the history of that diocese.

Many shufflings of constitutions have taken place since Canada passed under British rule. The Church alone, for two centuries and three-quarters, has pursued

* In order to show what a beautiful example this judicial dignitary bequeathed to his posterity, it is related that when the accounts of the Jesuits' states were examined by the House of Assembly in Lower Canada, it was found that one of the Church of England parsons, residing in Quebec, was in the habit of annually drawing a large income from the school funds on pretense of being "Chaplain to the Jesuits." "The Jesuits," says Wm. Lyon Mackenzie, who is authority for this story, "had been all dead many years before, and, besides, they were Roman Catholics. The parson's name was Sewell, a son of Johnathan, the Chief Justice."