

LETTER FROM BISHOP YOUNG—DIOCESE OF ATHABASCA.

ATHABASCA LANDING, ALTA., N.W.T.
April 30th, 1897.*(Concluded.)*

MY abode during the two days spent at Trout Lake was the single roomed house in which the poor crazy Indian had been killed with repeated blows of the axe the previous winter. In the corner, the most convenient spot for my bed to be arranged, grim blotches on the walls flimsily veiled by a light coat of mud wash were silent witnesses to the tragedy. One of the first to come and see me was the perpetrator of the deed, an amiable looking elderly Indian whose broad pleasant face it was difficult to associate with the cruel deed. Being requested to do so, after a long silence, the old man gave a plain unvarnished account of the affair constantly saying he did not want to do it but was urged to it by his own and the fears of those about him. The Indians are in abject terror of any one thought to be a "Wetigoo." An expression equivalent to our word "Cannibal" but with a strong spice of demoniacal possession associated with it.

He had been in constant dread of a visit from the Mounted Police and being taken out for trial. He appeared much relieved, when I told him that no further action would be taken by the Government after the publication of its Proclamation which was posted up in the house. I warned him that the Government suffered neither white men nor Indians to kill each other.

I told him that by Christian men crazy people were considered objects for compassion and kind treatment rather than fit subjects for the axe.

This cleared the way for talk and instruction in better things. Our guests did not leave till after ten and my host remarked that he had not seen the old man so cheerful for a long time. My host, Alex. Kennedy, from the St. Peter's Reserve, Red River, was one of the famous brigade of boat-men summoned by Sir Garnet (afterwards Lord) Wolsley to work the boats up the Nile Cataracts during the General Gordon Relief expedition. At present he is noted as the fastest runner in the North. Some two years ago between 4 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. he ran with his dogs, only stopping once, from a Co.'s post on the Peace River to their post on Lesser Slave Lake, a distance of, at least, one hundred miles. A Co.'s clerk taking the time when he started and he asking the time of one of their clerks on his arrival at Slave Lake. As he unhitched his dogs at the close, the leader staggered and rolled over

twice from sheer fatigue. He, like Johnson, is engaged in the fur trade.

The next morning I hired an Indian with his dogs to take me to a camp twenty miles distant at the other end of Trout Lake. This consists of two fine sheets of water separated from each other by a low swampy neck of land about half a mile across. Alex. accompanied me going ahead with his own dogs. He alternated a hard run with a ride, standing on the tail end of the flat sleigh. He made the running. I was content to be a passenger, running only at times to promote circulation. We reached the camp, about five tents pitched among huge pine trees. Selecting the chief man's tent we were soon squatting on the blankets before a good fire. After a talk on general subjects and a meal, while the occupants of the other tents kept dropping in; I took out my syllabic book and sang one of our hymns in Cree. I then addressed them from portions of St. Matthew's and St. John's Gospel, urging the need of a new heart to understand the things of God, and speaking of a Saviour's love.

They begged me to open a Mission among them. I told them I would not promise what I could not perform, but that if I got the means I would do so. We got back after dark to find that Colin had been baking bread and feeding up our dogs for our further trip. The Indians from immediately around came in again and it was pretty late before I got to sleep. No trail existed, as the following morning we turned our faces in a south-westerly direction for White Fish Lake. The snow was unusually deep. An Indian about to visit his traps agreed to go ahead and break track. After two days hard travelling we reached "Cranberry Lake," which is long and narrow but with apparently good high land around it, about 4.30 p.m. One solitary shanty of one room hardly 12 x 12 stood near the shore. As our dogs ascended the bank, about four or five men and boys came out to shake hands. Three families were already in occupation. How to take in three full grown men and their belongings besides, might have presented a problem difficult of solution to a European mind; for the Indian it was not worth a thought. A bedstead "shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it," (a passage that is more forcible after experience) was assigned to me and an attempt made to clear it of its debris. Taking one lingering look at the evening sky with the rich tints of evening deepening upon it, and with one sigh for camp fire, fragrant brush, silent pines and bright stars overhead, I entered the low gloomy shanty. Colin brought in my bedding. I found that for lack of room my bedstead must serve for divan as well as bed. I spread out my deer-skin robe hair down-