

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### MISSION WORK ON THE UPPER OTTAWA —FORT TEMISCAMINGUE AND THE REGIONS BEYOND—

Having said so much about our voyage up the Ottawa from Mattawan to Fort Temiscamingue, I must not dwell upon the Fort itself and its surroundings at present. These will afford matter for another letter at some future time. Suffice it for the present to say that the place has been evidently marked out by nature for such a purpose. Its site is strikingly beautiful and commanding, and the view from it remarkably fine. On Monday morning we again held a service with the family, including the domestics and such of the servants of the Company as could be gathered together. After dinner, in a canoe which was declared to be the fastest on the lake, and bore the classic name of "Stella," with three of a crew, besides Mr. Taylor and myself, the former, however, taking a paddle on this occasion, and I doing the humble part of serving as ballast, with the invariable complement of provisions and cooking utensils, we set off for the head of the lake, twenty-five or thirty miles, to visit some families who had begun to form a settlement there. Above the Fort the lake widens out to about double its average breadth below it. At the head it becomes very broad, shallow and somewhat marshy. Night had come down upon us and the stars shone out brightly in the clear sky. I was much interested in observing a little, tawny-skinned, bright-eyed Indian boy in front of me, gazing up into and scanning the starry heavens, as he kept time with his paddle. While I could not divine, I could not help speculating upon, what thoughts of vague wonder and admiration, and intuitive appreciation of the beauty of the scene were passing through his mind. By the time we got back, I must confess that I had formed a strong liking for Johnny, the name by which our little Indian passed. But a very practical question was, all the while, also occupying our minds—how to find and keep the channel of the river in the darkness, which unless we could do, it was very certain we should have to pass a not very pleasant night. While exploring round for this purpose, the sound of other paddles than ours was heard, and to our salute a salute was returned. Presently a canoe with two men and one woman, half breeds going off to hunt, came alongside, and the operation of shaking hands all round in dumb show, in the night, with people whom we could barely see, had never seen before, and probably never should see again, struck me as rather a comical proceeding, and at the same time showed how a "touch of nature makes the whole world kin." We parted after a few words in Indian between our guides and them, and at last reached our destination after the inmates, or rather the inmate, of the shanty which was to be our headquarters for the night, had gone to bed. He was keeping bachelor's hall, and as soon as roused and fairly awake, bustled about and made supper. I noticed, when I went in, a Bible lying on his table as if it had just been used before retiring. How significant a very small thing may be! After supper, it was again laid down, and worship over, we made our bed on the floor and slept soundly till the heavy but active step of our host preparing breakfast before daylight, awoke us. After washing and combing in the primitive style, which will be still remembered by many early settlers, when there was a great deal more room for such things outside than within their small shanties, and breakfast over, the Bible was again brought out, without being asked for, and with such a hearty, right good will that our hearts were at once enlarged and all a-glow. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," which have given us a book whose words so tender, true and strong, whose promises so rich and free, whose appeals and examples so inspiring, find in all places and among all classes an answering chord in every spiritual mind. We visited four other families close by, and one on our homeward journey,—all old Hudson's Bay Company's men, most, if not all of them married to half-breeds, and speaking Indian as well as English. This was one hundred miles, at least, from Mattawan; it had taken us about four days to reach it under most favourable circumstances, and yet was a part of the field of Mr. Taylor. This will serve to shew, in some measure, the kind of work our missionary in these parts has to do. On our return we had to face a

strong head wind, which raised quite a swell, over which our canoe gaily and lightly rode. Wednesday morning we again started on our return, leaving with regret the kind friends at the Fort. The night was spent at a comfortable and well-known "stopping-place," as the country wayside inns are called in this region, and again closed the day with reading the Scriptures, exposition and prayer, with the family. Three o'clock next morning found us on our way, and in good time we enjoyed the exciting pleasure of running the Long Sault Rapid. It is interesting to watch the coolness, skill and ease with which the Indians manage their frail birch bark canoes. Here they and we parted, bidding good-by with mutual kindly feeling. Mr. Taylor and I were to strike off into the Keepaw country, and our fellow-voyageurs to keep on their course down the river. We had no means of conveyance, but trusted to the proverbial hospitality and obliging disposition of the people of the country, and we were not disappointed. We called at a farm worked by three young men who were living here by themselves, and although they had still a good deal of grain uncut in October, and time was most precious, they at once offered us the use of their canoe and one of them volunteered to see us across the river and over the first portage of about a mile on Gordon's Creek, up which we had now to make our way. The creek is very rough, and as the water was low we had now to carry our canoe—at least Mr. Taylor had—now to lead it up among the boulders, and now to push it with our paddles with all our strength. At one point the laborious monotony of our course was varied by a little incident of travel. Owing to the unsteadiness peculiar to so small a craft as that which we now had, it suddenly darted to one side, and when I went to sit down in it the canoe was not there, and so I landed in the creek. Fortunately the water was shallow, and as I did not prolong my sit in the water, nothing worse than a wetting was the result. At last, hungry, tired, and wet, we reached a shanty occupied by two men, and were regaled as soon as possible with bread, potatoes, fried pork and gravy, all of the best quality, and tea innocent of either milk or sugar. When this is the best that can be done for you, and it is given with the most open-hearted hospitality, and the appetite is whetted to its sharpest edge, questions of cuisine are made short work of. Here again we were sent on our way with a man and a canoe, and at last emerged into the Keepaw Lake region. This lake is a very large body of beautiful, clear water, dotted over with islands of all sizes, and having such an infinite number of bays and inlets, large and small, that only those well acquainted with their intricacies are able to thread their way among them. Upon entering the lake you are at once filled with a sense of its largeness, and the extent of the country in which it is, as it were, hidden away. The whole district is well known for the wealth of its resources in timber, and hundreds of stalwart, brawny-armed men are at this moment engaged in turning these to account. The first two places at which we called, both cases of men living by themselves in shanties and farming, we did not find any one at home, and so pushed on some miles to a third place, where lived a young husband and wife, whom I had united in these happy bonds eight months before. Here the usual unending kindness and hospitality awaited us, and evident gladness to see and welcome the ministers of the gospel. Some neighbours were with them, and closing the day after our usual manner, we retired. Next day, Friday, we went still farther on to Hunter's Lodge, a post of the Hudson's Bay Co. We found the agent and his wife at home, a man-servant—an old Scotchman from the Orkneys—his wife, a half breed, and daughter, and after a most bounteous repast and securing every mark of attention and kindness, we had worship with them all, and retraced our course. The evening before, on our way up, we had left a notice written on a card, on the door of one of the houses we called at, of service to be held next afternoon at a house across the lake, and now we had to hasten to keep this appointment. Here again, we found a Scotchman married to an Indian, and all the family and a few others being present, we had service, and as soon as it was over, started onward to visit two other households. At all the places above mentioned there were what are called farms, but which for the most part appeared rather like large rockeries with a little soil among the stones. Nearly all the settlers are talking of leaving, and no wonder. Here, at one time, hay sold at from fifty to one hundred dollars a ton, and oats

readily at a dollar a bushel. But these days are past, and at ordinary prices the few and poor inhabitants cannot live by farming. Here we got another guide, and after some miles of sailing, and a walk over a portage, with the help of a lumberer, we reached a "stopping-place," just as our candle was flickering to go out. Here we were feasted on bread and milk, and the rate at which they disappeared, especially under the vigorous and well-sustained attack of our guide, was, in the language of the country, "a fright," but, to be more classical, would have made the "boldest hold his breath." This walk I shall not soon forget. It was through a dense wood, over a narrow intricate foot-path, obstructed by logs and fallen trees of all sizes, stones, roots, and swampy holes; the night was very dark and close, our candle threatened every moment to give out and leave us there or to get through if we could, so we posted on at top speed till we came in sight of a light, and to our call, for we were now in some doubt just where we were, we were answered by the friendly bark of a dog. Never was bark more welcome to me. On we pushed again, and at length, drenched with perspiration, got to the solitary house. We found several men but no woman about the place, and on our arrival all hands wakened up and turned out. After a thorough and most grateful ablution, and the repast spoken of, all reverently joined in worship, and soon "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep" soothed us to rest and oblivion of all the toil of the day. This was a very lonely place, and, compared with many of the beautiful spots we had seen, unattractive. But there is no accounting for tastes; next day the landlord, a big, warm-hearted Irishman, told me in a confidential tone, which seemed to mean don't tell anybody, "I have not seen any place in Canada where I would like so well to live." He cheerfully set us on our way several miles to the next stopping place. We walked to the next house, a distance of six or eight miles, and from there we were sent on in a very rickety and disreputable-looking log canoe to Fort Eddy, which we reached at dark on Saturday evening. This is what is known as a lumberer's depot, and there is a store, numerous buildings for receiving and depositing supplies of all kinds needed by lumbermen, a farm, farm buildings and quite a number of men. Word was soon sent to all that there would be service next morning at eleven a.m. When that time came we found twenty-five or thirty people seated round the room—English and French, Protestant and Roman Catholic—and to them the glad tidings were preached, all apparently engaging with interest in the service. We were now within sixteen miles or so of the village of Mattawan, and word had been sent down with our Indians that there would be service on Sabbath evening. We were kindly sent on in a waggon about half of the distance, as far as it could be taken; the remainder of the road we walked, calling and reading the scriptures, and engaging in prayer with a family or two by the way. At length we reached our headquarters, within two miles of Mattawan, and were hailed with all kind and loving welcomes by as leal-hearted a host and hostess and family as are to be found anywhere. After rest and amply satisfying appetites not easy to satisfy, almost the whole family turned out, and again we took to our boats down to the village. The church was brightly lighted, there was a good attendance considering the mere handful of Protestants in the place, and so in solemn yet gladsome and united services of public worship, what may be called the properly missionary part of our journey and work closed. Monday was spent in visiting the families which had yet to be called on. Tuesday we travelled ten or twelve miles on foot Pembroke-ward, spending the night and holding service at another lumbering depot. Wednesday morning, took the tidy, swift little steamer, "Mattawan," and failing in our purpose to get as far on as we wished, we left word with the boat hands and others at the head of the Roche Capitaine portage of service that evening at our stopping-place. This was our last, and it was both well attended and apparently enjoyed. Next day Pembroke was reached, after an absence of sixteen days, on every one of which we had the privilege of holding religious service, now in a shanty with from two to half-a-dozen men, then with a family of father, mother and children, now at a lumbering depot, now at a rough wayside inn, then perhaps at a fort of the Hudson's Bay Company, and again at a place dedicated to the worship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. From Mattawan upwards and return, our journey extended over three