



"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

THE ONLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTEREST OF ENGLISH SPEAKING CATHOLICS WEST OF TORONTO.

VOL. XI, No. 24.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1895.

(\$ 2.00 per Year.
Single Copies 5 cents.)

Senate Reading Rm Jan 5

THE LAND OF THE MUSKEG.

[CONTINUED.]

It is easy to travel as far as Edmonton, in the north of Alberta. The train takes you there from Calgary. After that good bye to the iron horse. Messrs. Somerset and Pollen therefore make their journey begin at Edmonton. They left it, accompanied by many good wishes, on June 14, 1893, and pushed on to Athabaska Landing, 100 miles to the north, but still in Alberta. Athabaska Landing ("a square mile of territory and half a dozen log houses and stores") is the gate of the North. From here, says Mr. Pollen in the preface, all the stores go out that supply the Hudson's Bay Company's forts from Hudson's Hope to the mouth of the Mackenzie. A steamer plies up the river to the mouth of the Slave River, and down to where the rapids make the Athabaska no longer navigable.

"Athabaska" is mapped out as a Provisional District of the Northwest Territories. Nevertheless, according to Mr. Pollen, the authority of the Government hardly extends so far north. Athabaska Landing, he says, is the last outpost of the Canadian police. On the north bank of the River Athabaska, and over far the greater part of the Northwest, all the control the Indians know "is represented by the Hudson's Bay Company and missionaries of St. Mary Immaculate."

"These last fill a picturesque place in the history of the country. At almost every fort you will find the neat log-house and church of the Roman Catholic Mission; and the priests themselves are all highly educated men, whilst the most of them are of good French or French-Canadian families. Their influence with the Indians is immense. During the last rebellion the Canadian Government owed much to the missionaries' power of restraining incipient revolt, and every Hudson's Bay Company's officer we met was loud and unqualified in their praise, though these officers were to a man alien to their race and their creed. For ourselves we have a score of services to thank them for, and the Fathers at the Little Slave Lake, Smoky River, Dunvegan and Fort McLeod each put themselves and all they possessed at our disposal in the friendliest way. It was through Pere Husson, at Dunvegan, that we were able to make the arrangements that enabled Daukhan Tustowitz and John Knot—these invaluable men—to leave their families for the summer, secure in the consciousness that they were in good hands; to Pere Morice we owe a debt of thanks for much of the information that we obtained,—and to all a recollection of personal kindness and consideration that it will be a lasting pleasure to remember.

The Hudson's Bay Company itself, however, holds the pride of place in the north."—Preface.

The travellers speak as highly of the company's officers as our missionaries have always spoken.

The eleven chapters of the book describe the journey from Athabaska Landing, by Little Slave Lake to Dunvegan, on the Peace River; thence, through the Rocky Mountains, to Fort McLeod in British Columbia (not to be confounded with Fort McLeod in Alberta, to the south of Calgary); and so Stuart's Lake, and further south, as far as Quessnelle on the Fraser River, and finally (by stage coach, 250 miles) to Ashcroft (still in British Columbia) on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

At the outset, at the Smoky River Mission, on the far side of the Peace River, a wagon and the assistance of a Lay Brother were secured for the journey to Dunvegan. "The Brother (says Somerset in chapter II) had promised to call for us at the house of a half-breed named Pat." "After a fearful struggle we landed opposite Pat's cabin in a very exhausted condition." The Peace country is described as glorious, but intensely cold in winter. "The priests and one Mackenzie have cultivated a considerable portion of the valley." At the Mission House by the banks of the Peace, "the missionaries, Pere Xere (probably Le Serrec), Husson and Le Treste, were kindness itself, making us presents of milk and butter, and allowing us to camp before their door. It was here the travellers met Daukhan, a famous Indian hunter with some white

blood, a man of perfect manners, and speaking "the soft and beautiful Cree language." Three or four miles away was an American Mission in charge of Mr. John Gough Brick, rather a farmer than a missionary, the same man who is spoken of severely in the Daily Chronicle Review. Quite another sort of man however was Mr. Holmes, an American Missionary, met previously at the west of Little Slave Lake. And yet Mr. Somerset thinks all Anglican missionaries in that country "to a certain extent poachers." "In many places the Indians are Protestants in the winter, when the times are hard, and Catholics when there is nothing to be gained."

"Fort Dunvegan is a charming little place, lying close to the river between high bluffs." The Beaver or Tsuten Indians inhabit the district between Dunvegan and the Rocky Mountains. They are a race in every way inferior to the Crees. From Fort Dunvegan, on their way to Fort MacLeod, the travellers passed through what may safely be called a damp country.

"Unless an actual day-to-day diary were given, it is almost impossible to show the extraordinary amount of damp to which we were subject. To begin with, it rained almost every day, and when the sky was unclouded the bush was nearly always wet, so that one became thoroughly soaked from top to toe before the morning's work was over. For many days together one walked continually in swamp or muskeg to the ankle, and often for hours in water reaching well above the knee. But all this was of small consequence. A warm fire would always dry out one's clothes as one stood, so that one went to bed moderately dry. But it was during the night that the damp worked its worst upon us. We had small waterproof sheets under our blankets, and these were of great service to us, but one piece will do little against an acre of water. It must be understood that on many occasions one could plunge one's hand out of bed to the wrist or even to the elbow, if one had a mind to, in slushy water or sodden moss and mud. Of course now and again we found hard pieces of ground, and sometimes made dry camp; but the country, as a whole, was nothing but a vast morass, and in this sodden condition we marched and worked and slept. I have heard people who ought to know say that England is a damp climate to camp in, but England at its wettest would be mere child's play to this rain-haunted land. Looking back on the expedition now I do not wonder that we were delayed a little by sickness, but I always marvel that we got out of that country alive, or at least without some serious illness. And the most amusing part of the whole thing was, that one of the party had gone there under the doctor's orders. But, of course, neither this medical adviser, nor any one else for that matter, had any idea of the nature of the country."

Now perhaps we know enough of the muskeg, so we may start once more, with our travellers, as if leaving Fort Dunvegan.

"Daukhan brought us from Dunvegan to the Pine River—150 miles—without the aid of a trail for more than half the way. And now he brought us in a straight line to a place where he had only camped for a few days five years before."

Mr. Pollen with two men went from the Pine River northward to Moberley's Lake and came upon a series of lakes which he believes he was the first European to visit. Passing from plateau to plateau, he says, "As we topped the second rise we saw a tall wooden cross rising among the trees. Nothing could be more eloquent of the faith and nationality of the missionaries and for a moment one could imagine oneself on the outskirts of a French village in the mountain foot-hills of the Jura."

The travellers eventually passed through the Rockies, and after dreadful hardships reached Fort McLeod at the northern extremity of McLeod's Lake. Their next move was to Stewart's Lake 100 miles away. The Indians there, who live principally by fishing, build houses, so that there is quite a hamlet at Stewart's Lake, where the Hudson's Bay Company have a large fort with outbuildings. The name of the priest at Stewart's Lake is familiar to our readers, and Mr. Somerset says his influence with the Indians is prodigious.

"Father Morice (he adds) is the Catholic missionary, and we made his acquaintance almost as soon as we arrived, and thus came in contact with one of the most remarkable men in North-western America. Pere Morice himself is the greatest authority upon Carrier history and customs, and has written much concerning them. All that I shall say about these people I learned from him, and much that is written here is quoted from his writings."

After some days at Stewart's Lake Messrs. Somerset and Pollen set their faces to the Southeast. In two dug-out canoes they and their men went "down the rapids and away," first as far as Fort George, and then, on the Fraser River, very far south to the village of Quessnelle, "the wreck of a once prosperous mining camp." Their journey of many months was nearly over.

At Quessnelle they got a waggon to drive over the old Cariboo road as far as Ashcroft, 250 miles to the south. Coming into the little town of Ashcroft they met many Chilkotin Indians dressed in brightly colored clothes, who smiled upon us and said "Clelya" in a very friendly way." It is said that there was once a Hudson's Bay Company's officer called Clark, and men would come to his place and say "Clark, how are you?" The Indians made it "Clelya," and to them it answers to "Good morning." The Chilkotins were going to the town to a fair.

On the hills above Ashcroft Messrs. Somerset and Pollen saw the faint white smoke of a train, and so they really knew that their expedition was over. At Ashcroft station they were on the great Canadian Pacific railway and so in touch once more with civilization.

"THE PASSION PLAY."

Father Kavanagh's Lecture at St. Mary's Church—Addresses by Father Cherrier and Father Drummond, S. J.

As we predicted would be the case the lecture by Rev. Father Kavanagh, S. J., on "The Passion Play at Oberammergau" in aid of the funds of the Catholic Truth Society, attracted an immense audience to St. Mary's Church on Thursday evening last, in fact, the number of those present was so great that the large staff of ushers found it no easy matter to accommodate their patrons. And we may certainly say that not one of the vast throng at the close regretted having been present, for the entertainment was in all respects one of the most enjoyable and at the same time instructive ever given in the city. The arrangements were so perfect that it passed off without the slightest hitch, and we sincerely trust that this lecture may prove to be only the first of a series. The programme was opened with an artistically played violin and organ duet by Miss Denholme and Mr. Evans at the close of which

REV. FATHER KAVANAGH

commenced his lecture and for upwards of an hour and a half he held the attention of the large audience whilst he described in a most entertaining manner the various scenes which were thrown from a lantern fixed in the choir loft, and operated by Mr. Cheshire, onto a sheet stretched across the sanctuary. The first scene was a bird's-eye view of the little village of Oberammergau, showing the cluster of houses, with the church prominent in the centre, nestling in the village, with tall mountains looking down upon it from all sides. A map of Europe was next thrown on the scene by means of which the lecturer was able to point out to the audience the exact location of the village. Before proceeding further Father Kavanagh gave an account of the origin of the Passion Play at Oberammergau. He referred to the fact that in early days this method of interesting the common people in the teachings of religion was very frequently employed and existed in many places in Europe, but these "mystery plays" as they were called, have gradually been suppressed or died out except in two places, of which Oberammergau is the most famous. He related the circumstances of the origin of the play there, showing how at the end of a long war a terrible pestilence spread over the land and despite the precautions of the

authorities was eventually introduced into the village, where it raged with such violence that the people with one accord made a vow to the Almighty that if He would stop the plague they would once every ten years give a representation of the Passion in memory of His goodness and for His greater glory. God listened to the prayers, accepted the vow and the plague immediately ceased its ravages, and ever since then the Passion Play has been enacted every tenth year in the little Bavarian village. Father Kavanagh then described the villagers who take the various parts, all of whom are very simple, humble folk, most of them wood-carvers, but each of whom enter into the play with the same spirit which animated their pious ancestors who originated it, desiring only the greater glory of God. A scene was then thrown on the sheet representing the stage on which the play is presented, and this called forth a description of the great open-air theatre in which thousands from all parts of the world assemble to witness the proceedings. Next came an outline of the methods of the performers, showing how first a tableau would be presented of a scene from the old testament which was a type of something to come, followed by another tableau illustrating the part of our Lord's passion thus typified. Several very reliable views having been thrown on the sheet and each one appropriately described, a series of photographs of the most prominent characters was given and excited general admiration, notably those of Joseph Meyer and Rosa Lang who played the parts of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. Then the various steps in the Passion were put before the audience in a most vivid manner—the betrayal in the garden; Christ before Pilate and Herod; the scourging at the pillar; the crowning with thorns; the way of the cross; the crucifixion; the burial in the sepulchre—the whole concluding with the resurrection and ascension. The eloquent, descriptive lecture of the reverend father was rendered even more impressive by admirably chosen vocal selections at appropriate stages, as follows: "The Palms" and "Hear us, O Saviour" by Rev. Father LaRue, S. J., whose high tenor voice was singularly touching, and Rodney's "Calvary" by that accomplished singer, Mrs. McIvor. Father Kavanagh closed with a most eloquent peroration and in resuming his seat mentioned that there was one amongst them who had seen the play itself and they would, he had no doubt, be pleased to hear from him. In response to this

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rose and stated the circumstances under which he went to see the play in 1890 at the suggestion of Father Langevin, now their beloved archbishop. He admitted that before going he had not been at all favorably impressed as to the desirability of plays of this kind, but like everyone else he found it a wonderful revelation, which moved all the beholders to tears and could not fail to have a beneficial effect to the end of their lives upon all who witnessed it. Although speaking entirely without preparation, Father Cherrier, as the daily press put it, fairly electrified his audience with the dramatic and emotional description he gave of the noble and pathetic scenes represented by the humble villagers of Oberammergau. He concluded by moving a vote of thanks to Father Kavanagh.

Rev. Father Drummond seconded it and in doing so said he did not intend to keep the audience long, but there were a few thoughts that suggested themselves to him while perusing beforehand the structure of this wonderful play, and he would briefly submit them to the audience. First he would ask them had they realized how long ago that vow was made which was now being fulfilled every tenth year? It was in the year 1633—twenty-five years only after the founding of Quebec; when the first boy that was born in America from the Pilgrim fathers was only twelve years old; when Lewis XIII reigned in France and Charles I was still king of England. They saw how far that brought them back in the past ages, and yet the vow made on that day in 1633, which so effectually stayed the plague, had been kept until this day, and they trusted it might be kept for many a decade yet. This meant that twenty-seven times during two hundred and seventy years

that great performance had been carried out in every detail by the inhabitants of this simple hamlet in the mountains of Bavaria. He considered this something very peculiar in the history of the world, something that was absolutely impossible outside of that religion which claimed from its chief—"Eternal Peter of the Changeless Chair." This could not be done where there was any change in religious sentiment—or else the people would have gradually lost the seriousness with which they regarded the whole proceeding; it could not be done where there was any diversity in belief or else their hearts would not beat as one in going through the great tragedy; it could only be done, therefore, where there was that which represents so perfectly the majesty of God—the Eternity of Truth—where that was—oh! then the soul realized all that had taken place in the greatest of all tragedies—it understood that that tragedy was the one act towards which all that went before led up, and all that came after is but the implication and the development. Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, and the history of his work was the history of mankind, but the central point of his work was his death on the cross. No tragedy was ever like unto this. The books tell us that the elements of tragedy were terror and pity, and where was there terror such as this—terror for the mother's heart; terror for the disciples that loved him; terror at the thought that all was coming to an end. How the weak in faith must have felt as they stood at the foot of the cross, and asked themselves "Has His life then been a failure, is everything going to fall away, is all this a gigantic fraud?" And oh! the pity of it—the most lovable of the children of man to be forsaken by His friends "Greater love hath no man than this that he gives his life for his friends." He gave His life not for friends, but for His enemies, for His murderers, and it was said by those who had heard the play that one of the most touching things was to hear Joseph Meyer, stretched upon the cross, exclaim "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" What prayer like that had ever been heard before? This, then was the tragedy of tragedies. It was the one that linked together everything that made dramatic power most effective. The three passions which went to constitute the strength of all dramatic work were ambition, love and hatred and in this tragedy they had the ambition of the High Priest, the love of the mother, of the disciples and the surpassing love of Jesus for mankind; finally they had the hatred of the scribes and the pharisees for One who threatened to overthrow their power. What wonder then that this tragedy should have taken hold of Europe as no modern play had ever done.

Father Kavanagh briefly responded and in doing so thanked Mr. Cheshire who had operated the lantern and the musicians who had assisted.

This unique and enjoyable entertainment was then brought to a close and the audience dispersed, as we have said well satisfied. The members of the Catholic Truth Society are to be congratulated on receiving as a result of the lecture a substantial addition to their funds. We trust that this will encourage them to further efforts in the same direction and that they will induce Father Kavanagh to give a similar lecture during the coming winter. We would add, in conclusion, that not a little of the success of the entertainment was due to the excellence of the musical items. Miss Denholme has before this proved that she is an artiste and her selections on Thursday evening were given in a manner that more than sustained her already high reputation. It was the first time we had had the pleasure of hearing the Rev. Father LaRue, but we sincerely trust it may not be the last. He possesses a most sweet and pure tenor voice which he knows how to use to the best advantage, and without effort. Mrs. McIvor was in good voice, and the accompanists being in the capable hands of Mr. Evans, were of course, all that could be desired.

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