

*La'e from the Rev. G. McDougall, dated Saskatchewan, Victoria, April 1st, 1871.*

Now that the dark cloud, which for more than a year has enveloped this land, begins to disperse, we naturally enquire for what reason has God, in his mysterious Providence, suffered these terrible things to come upon us? More than one-third of the inhabitants have been swept away by that fearful disorder, the small-pox, and yet, however paradoxical the statement, the language of Joseph is applicable,—"But God meant it for good to bring to pass as it is at this day, to save much people."

In the last three or four years, the Plain tribes have manifested a ferocity among themselves, and a contempt for the white-faced stranger, very striking when compared with their past history; so much so, that all hopes of a peaceful settlement seemed to vanish. Last summer the Master of life permitted a visitation, which has deeply humbled these vain men; and while we witnessed with anguish of soul their indelible sufferings, we also felt it was better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man; better far to perish by pestilence than by sword;—their inevitable end if no change had come. We have good reason to believe that their afflictions have been sanctified. My son, who has lately returned from visiting the Plain Crees, reports them as very quiet, and anxious to listen to the Missionary. Quite a number have resolved to give up the chase and settle at our Missions.

The poor Blackfeet, who for months, and that on Dominion soil, have been pillaged and depopulated by American alcohol traders, are now sending us messages of peace. Their case, on the part of our Government, demands immediate attention, not only for the sake of the unfortunate native, but also as regards the peace and prosperity of this great country. If multitudes of unprincipled men, to avoid the laws of their own country, can at pleasure cross our lines and establish scores of low grog-shops, then from the Missouri will roll back on us such a flood of intemperance and demoralization as shall make the fairest part of this North-west one vast field of blood and contention.

In the Upper Saskatchewan we are

face to face with a powerful and enterprising neighbor, who, with astonishing energy, is erecting military and trading posts; and this would give us no anxiety if similar improvements were made on our side. The American punishes with severity the infringement of the law, prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks to Indians; but Benton and Montana traders cross the 49th parallel, and, in defiance of law, carry on their loathsome traffic. To quote from a letter of a close observer, who spent December and January among the whisky vendors of Billy River,— "No language can describe these drunken orgies; more than 60 Blackfeet have been murdered; if there can be a transcript of hell upon earth, it is here exhibited." I know there are those who will say, "All right: the sooner the redskin is swept from the plains the better." Thank God, this is not the voice of Canada; her sons and daughters have been trained to sympathize with the poor Indian, and view with commiseration his struggle for existence before the ever-increasing flood of civilization.

In the Saskatchewan they must be protected, and the only way by which this can be done is to establish a military post at Bow River, where the revenue laws would be enforced and impartial justice to red and white administered. The present time is favorable for a settlement with these tribes. An enemy more terrible than war has, to some extent, subdued their fighting spirit. Their country is the finest part of the North-west. I have travelled in every part of the Western Prairies, from the Winnipeg to the mountains, and I have seen nothing to compare to Bow River section.

Gold, coal, and timber abundant; numberless small rivers and rivulets, flowing from the mountains, water the plain; the grand old mountains, with their snow-capped peaks, add to the prospect a sublimity and beauty that cannot be described. Statesmen of Canada! here is a field worthy of your noblest effort. "Christian philanthropists! to you we appeal on behalf of a down-trodden and rapidly perishing people; the precious gift they need, you can bestow. The gospel is not, an