

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.

REMINISCENCES OF THE HURON MISSIONS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE, TORONTO, MARCH 19, 1887, BY THE REV. FATHER LAHOREAU, OF PENETANGUISHENE.

We naturally expect to find reminiscences of the Hurons and of the Huron Missions in the district around the Penetanguishene Bay, and indeed they are abundant. Nor are they confined exclusively to the country once occupied by the Indians of that nation.

On a recent visit to France I was agreeably surprised to find that in my native Province of Burgundy, now the Department of La Cote d'or, they were discussing some questions in connection with the Hurons and one of their old missionaries. Having announced myself as coming from Canada, engaged in the project of erecting a Church as a monument to recall and perpetuate the memory of the Huron Missions, I was handed a number of the *Bulletin d'Historie et d'Archeologie de Dijon*, the capital of Burgundy, in which was a paper on one of the Huron missionaries. A letter, dated from Ste Marie des Hurons, 1645, and signed "Chaumonot," had been found in a collection of autographs belonging to a gentleman of Chatillon-sur Seine, in the same Department of Cote-d'or, near which place Chaumonot was born. The letter has this peculiarity that it is written, not on paper, but on birch bark. We know how the Iroquois, cutting off all communication between Quebec and the Huron country, rendered rare on the shores of the Georgian Bay the supplies of civilization. A curiosity to know more about Chaumonot and his doings in that far off country had thus been excited, and they were glad to ask explanations of one of their countrymen who lived in the country they were writing about, and who could throw some light on the subject under discussion. Already correspondence had been opened with the President of Laval University at Quebec, Dr. Hamel in his answer remarking that in the old capital of what once was New France, they collected with great care everything connected with the first missions to Canada, and requesting his correspondent, since he could not expect him to part with his precious bark, the original letter, to be so kind as to send him an exact copy of this letter of Chaumonot's, suggesting that a photograph of it would give yet greater satisfaction. Photographs were taken, one of them destined for Laval University, and as the museums of our own Province in which lies the old Huron country should also, I think, have a photograph of the curiosity, I have pleasure in presenting one to the museum of this Institute. A half-breed woman, of Penetanguishene, framed it in decorated bark after the Indian fashion. The letter, however, is altogether of a private character, and addressed to an old tutor. On account of the paleness of the ink, and the tint of the bark, the writing is somewhat indistinct, but the letter was deciphered and printed in *The Bulletin*.

I could not leave France without going to Normandy, the country of the founder of the Huron Missions, the noble and heroic Jean de Brebeuf. There I found his memory green and in honour. Noble families point out with pride some de Brebeuf among their ancestors. In a village near Caen, the capital of Lower Normandy, where two noted members of his family died, a marble monument, with an inscription in Latin, in honor of himself and his two relatives, was erected only lately by their admirers. I cannot resist the temptation to transcribe here that part of the inscription which refers to the martyr missionary :

Tam illustrium virorum magno nomine
Illustravit

Eadem vetere nobilique stirpe prognatus
D. Joannes Brebovius

Soc. Jesu,
Quem communis Neustria parens edidit
Felici partu

Alterum exceptit nova Francio Paulum
Et dignum Xaverii germanum :

At miris excarnificatum modis,
Lento ustum igne,

Condentibus securibus ustulatum
Coelo transmisit,

Rarum

Christianæ fortitudinis et heroicæ virtutis
Exemplum.

But we must come to Canada and the Huron country. In a paper published in the Proceedings of the Institute for 1885-86, Mr. David Boyle gave very valuable suggestions of what should be done in reference to archæological investigations, in order to keep the records of numerous historic sites, before their traces become wholly obliterated by the plough or otherwise. It is well known that in the old Huron district in twenty places and more, we should find traces and reminiscences of the Hurons.

Commencing on the Bay of Penetanguishene, near the spot where must have stood Thonatrira, where the Jesuit missionaries established their first residence, on the lot letter B, in the 18th concession of the township of Tiny, one of those well-known large burial-pits was first found by a half breed of the place. He searched it, took out what seemed to him of most interest and value—large shells, peculiarly shaped pipes and a variety of other articles, the whole of which was sold for a small sum of money to a collector of Indian curiosities, and taken away to enrich some museum out of this Province.

In the vicinity, exactly opposite the present site of the town of Penetanguishene, French axes were found in two or three places. Further west, in lot 16 in the 16th concession, and then south in the 12th, clay pipes of Indian manufacture and imported axes have been taken on the ground, and are still turned up by the plough. South again in the 10th concession, and also in the 7th or 8th, ossuaries near the site of the great Huron town of Ossossane, or La Conception, have been opened and ransacked, but it appears there was not much found to reward the spoliators. The site of the town, which was one of the largest of the Hurons, and which seems to have been constantly inhabited, has not been identified yet. An abundant harvest should be hidden in its ruins.

A few years ago the wife of a farmer brought me something she had found on their lands, lot No. 16 in the 6th conc. of Tiny. It was a brass ring, roughly finished, with the monogram of the Saviour roughly surmounted by a cross, engraven on it. The work is too rude to be of European workmanship; it must have been done on the spot by the Indians, or the attendants of the Jesuits. I should think that such rings were used in the marriage ceremony. The finding of the ring suggested to me that the site of Ossossane, where the missionaries had a residence and one of their principle churches, must be in the near neighbourhood. I have brought the ring with me, to leave it in the Museum of the Institute.

Turning to the east, inclining to the north and passing on lot No. 98, Old Surrey, on the Penetanguishene road, where the settlers recognized traces of an Indian village, at a distance of about nine miles, on the right bank of the River Wye, we strike the old French Fort of Ste. Marie. Mr. James Baine has described before this Institute its present condition. Last summer, when visiting its ruins, I heard that the children of the present owner had amused themselves with pick and shovel, burrowing among the stones of the tumbled-down foundation. Having unearthed some old pieces of iron, they searched for more, and succeeded in bringing to light several rusty axes, pieces of guns, knives, some tools and tomahawks, one of which I have brought with me for the Museum of the Institute.

Passing still further on eastward, we should find traces of several villages, St. Louis and others. There is an extensive burial pit, I think in the 3rd concession of the