

The Traveller To His Heart.

Do not lose thy courage, heart? The way is long, the mountain steep; Ere on the mountain height thou canst breathe free, The path most steep.

AMERICAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL RESEARCHES.

The Scenes of the Huron Missions, and the Martyrdom of Fathers Brebeuf and L'Allemant.

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.

On the day following the visit to St. Mary's of Old Fort, Father Campbell and your correspondent set out with a horse and buggy on a long drive of nineteen miles for the site of the mission of St. Ignace, the most interesting of all the points in this, for the American Catholic, most interesting country.

It was the scene of the martyrdom of Fathers John de Brebeuf and Gabriel L'Allemant.

To Mr. John Gilmery Shea we are deeply indebted for the accounts he has gathered and given us in the History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States; but in addition to the account he has given us in the above mentioned work I have found in the Report of the Canadian Archives of the year 1884 very kindly sent to me by Mr. Joseph Murphy of the Department of Crown Lands, Toronto, Ontario, the copy of a letter written by the Jesuit Brother, who was the companion of Fathers Brebeuf and L'Allemant, describing accurately the manner and circumstances of their death, which I am sure will be of the highest interest to the readers of your Quarterly.

The Report of the Archives gives both the quaint French of the Brother's letter and the English translation. I send you only the latter.

"Veritable account of the martyrdom and most happy death of Father Jean de Brebeuf and of Father Gabriel L'Allemant in New France, in the country of the Hurons by the Iroquois, enemies of the Faith."

Father Jean de Brebeuf and Father Gabriel L'Allemant had set out from our cabin, to go to a small boat, called St. Ignace, distant from our cabin about a short quarter of a league, to instruct the savages and the new Christians of that bourg. It was on the 16th day of March, (1649), in the morning, that we perceived a great fire at the place to which these two good fathers had gone. This fire made us very uneasy. We did not know whether it was enemies or whether the fire had taken in some of the huts of the village. The Rev. Father Paul Ragueneau, our Superior, immediately resolved to send some one to learn what might be the cause. But no sooner had we formed the design of going there to see, than we perceived several savages on the road coming straight towards us. We all thought it was the Iroquois who were coming to attack us, but having considered them more closely, we perceived that it was Hurons who were flying from the fight and who had escaped from the combat. These poor savages caused great pity in us.

They were all covered with wounds. One had his head fractured; another his arm broken; another of their arrows in his eye; another had his arm cut off by a blow from an axe. In fine the day was passed receiving into our huts all these poor wounded people, and in looking with compassion towards the fire and the place where went these two good fathers. We saw the fire and the barbarians, but we could not see anything of the two Fathers.

Here is what these savages told us of the taking of the Bourg of St. Ignace and of the Fathers Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel L'Allemant:—

The Iroquois came to the number of twelve hundred men; took our village; took Father Brebeuf and his companion; set fire to all the huts.

They proceeded to discharge their rage on these two Fathers, for they took them both and stripped them entirely naked, and fastened each to a post.

They tied both their hands together. They beat them with a shower of blows from outside, on the shoulders, the loins, the belly, the legs and the face, there being no part of their body which did not endure this torment. They told us further: Although Father Brebeuf was overwhelmed under the weight of these blows, he did not cease continually to speak of God, and to encourage all the new Christians who were captives like himself to suffer well, that they might die well in order to go to company with him to Paradise. Whilst the good Father was thus encouraging these good people, a wretched Huron renegade, who had remained a captive with the Iroquois, and whom Father Brebeuf had formerly instructed and baptised, hearing him

speak of Paradise and Holy Baptism, was irritated and said to him, "Echon," that is Father Brebeuf's name in Huron, "thou sayest, that baptism and the sufferings of this life lead straight to Paradise, thou wilt go soon, for I am going to baptize thee and to make thee suffer well, in order to go the sooner to thy Paradise."

"The barbarian having said that, took a kettle full of boiling water, which he poured over his body three different times, in derision of holy Baptism. And each time that he baptized him in this manner the barbarian said to him with bitter sarcasm, "Go to Heaven, for thou art well baptised."

After that they made him suffer several other torments. The first was to make axes red hot and to apply them to the loins and under the arms. They made a collar of these red hot axes and put it on the neck of this good Father. This is the fashion in which I have seen it made for other prisoners. They make six axes red hot, and take a large wattle of green wood pass the six axes through the large end of the wattle like the two ends together, and then put it over the neck of the sufferer. I have seen no torment which more moved me to compassion than that. For you see a man bound naked to a post, who having this collar on his neck, cannot tell what posture to take. For if he lean forward, those above his shoulders weigh the more on him; if he lean back, those on his stomach make him suffer the same torment, if he keep erect, without leaning to one side or the other, the burning axes applied equally on both sides, give him a double torture.

After that they put on him a belt full of pitch and resin and set fire to it, which roasted his whole body. During all these torments, Father Brebeuf endured like a rock insensible to fire and flames which astonished all the blood-thirsty wretches who tormented him. His zeal was so great that he preached continually to those infidels to try to convert them. His executors were enraged against him for constantly speaking to them of God and their conversion. To prevent him speaking more, they cut off his upper and lower lips. After that they set themselves to strip the flesh from his legs, thighs, and arms, to the very bone, and put it to roast before his eyes in order to eat it. Whilst they tormented him in this manner, these wretches derided him, saying, "Thou seest well that we treat thee as a friend, since we shall be the cause of thy eternal happiness; thank us then for these good offices which we render thee, for the more thou shalt suffer, the more will thy God reward thee."

The villains seeing that the good Father began to grow weak, made him sit down on the ground, and one of them taking a knife, cut off the skin covering his skull. Another of these barbarians seeing that the good Father would soon die, made an opening in the upper part of his chest, tore out his heart which he roasted and ate. Others came to drink his blood still warm, which they drank with both hands, saying that Father Brebeuf had been very courageous to endure so much pain as they had given him, and that in drinking his blood they would become courageous like him.

This is what we learned of the martyrdom and most happy death of Father Jean de Brebeuf by several Christian savages worthy of belief, who had been constantly present from the time the good Father was taken till his death. These good Christians were prisoners to the Iroquois, who were taking them into their country to be put to death. But our good God was gracious enough to enable them to escape by the way, and they came to us to recount all that I have set down in writing.

Father Brebeuf was taken on the 16th day of March, in the morning, with Father L'Allemant in the year 1649. Father Brebeuf died the same day of his capture about four o'clock in the afternoon. These barbarians threw the remains of his body into the fire, but his fat which still remained on his body extinguished the fire and he was not consumed.

I do not doubt that all that I have just related is true, and I would seal it with my blood, for I have seen the same treatment given to Iroquois prisoners whom the Huron savages had taken in war, with the exception of the boiling water which I have not seen poured on anyone.

I am about to describe truly what I saw of the martyrdom and of the most happy death of Father Jean de Brebeuf and of Father Gabriel L'Allemant. On the next morning, when we had assurance of the departure of the enemy, we went to the spot to seek for the remains of their bodies, to the place where their lives had been taken. We found them both, but a little apart from one another. They were brought to our hut, and laid uncovered upon the bark of trees, where I examined them at leisure, for more than two hours' time, to see if what the savages had told us of their martyrdom and death were true. I examined first the body of Father de Brebeuf, which was pitiful to see, as well as that of Father L'Allemant.

The body of Father de Brebeuf had his legs, thighs and arms stripped of flesh to the very bone; I saw and touched a large number (quantity) of great blisters, which he had on several places on his body, from the boiling water which these barbarians poured over him in imitation of Holy Baptism. I saw and touched the wound from a belt of bark, full of pitch and resin which roasted his whole body. I saw and touched the marks of burns from the collar of axes placed on his shoulders and stomach. I saw and touched his two lips which they had cut off because he constantly spoke of God whilst they made him suffer. I saw and touched the top of his scalped (corched) head; I saw and touched the opening which these barbarians had made to tear out his heart. In fine, I saw and touched all the wounds of his body such as the savages had told and assured us of; we buried these precious relics on Sunday the 21st day of March, 1649, with much consolation. I had the happiness of carrying them to the grave and of inhuming them with those of Father Gabriel L'Allemant. When we left the country of the Hurons, we lifted both bodies from the ground and set them to boil in strong lye. All the

bones were well scraped, and the care of having them dried was given to me. I put them every day into a little oven made of clay, which we had, after having heated it slightly, and when in a state to be packed, they were wrapped separately in silk stuff. Then they were put into two small chests and we brought them to Quebec, where they are held in great veneration.

It is not a doctor of the Sorbonne who has composed this, as you may easily see, it is a remnant from the Iroquois, and who is and shall be ever, Sir, Your very humble and very obedient servant; CHRISTOPHER REGAUD, Conjoint Brother with the Jesuits of Caen, 1678, Companion of Fathers Brebeuf and L'Allemant above mentioned.

This letter I give word for word and point for point as it is given in page LXV. of the report of the Canadian Archives of 1884.

Setting out early in the morning with Father Campbell and taking the Coldwater Road, which starts in a westerly direction from Orillia, we soon came to a beautiful lake called Bass Lake, no doubt which sport in its waters. This body of water, which is four miles in length, three in width, is shut in on all sides by steep, well-wooded banks, and seems to be as free from the incursions of fishermen as on the day the Indians left the country. Not a boat, save a useless flat-bottomed tub, that some farmer's son had some time in the past must have patched together out of a few spare boards, to try his luck, could be seen. Only one house was near. It looked like a charming place to spend a quiet day with a few congenial friends fishing. It is 797 feet above the sea.

Passing it by reluctantly, we hastened onward in a northerly direction to Warminster, where we were to spend the night. A beautiful little church, tended by Father Campbell from Orillia, and thence onward until the road entered a valley and ran in a northerly direction along the foot and to the right of the ridge on which the mission of St. Ignace was situated. As we journeyed along the absence of all nut-bearing trees was very noticeable. We made of acorns, nuts nor hickories, nor walnuts, a poor place for our boys in fall and winter. Father Campbell told me that there were a few butternuts or beechnuts; but in very small quantities. This same state of affairs must have existed at the time the Jesuit Fathers labored here; for their efforts to supply the starving Hurons with food relied mainly on an unpalatable bark, keeping still towards the north, we began to ascend until we struck a very rough road branching off to the left and the west, which climbed the ridge above mentioned. About noon we reached the summit. After partaking of our lunch and feeding our foot and horse, we turned in a southerly direction on the Gloucester road through the woods, in which were many of the birch trees, from which the Indians procured the bark for their canoes. We soon came to the site of the Indian town or mission of St. Ignace. It consisted of the western half of Lot Number 20 in the 10th concession in Medonte township.

That your readers may understand this division of townships into lots and concessions I may state, that on the maps each township is divided into parcels parallelograms one mile in width by two miles in length. Thus in the Medonte township the concessions are made of two miles running east and west, while the lots are one mile in width running north and south; or, in other words, the long side of the parallelogram is called the concession and the short side the lot. Medonte, starting from its boundary line on the south dividing it from Oro township, and running along its northern boundary dividing it from Tay township, starting from the west and running east, has 14 concessions.

Coming to the farm which now occupies the site of the Huron town, we found two houses built upon it. One, the larger one, of older, and, if I remember rightly, built of logs, was inhabited by Mrs. James Fox, a low-aided, whole-souled, good Catholic Irish woman, who at the time of our visit had lived here for forty four years. Her husband had died the year before our visit. How she and her husband came here, and what induced them to stay, for all the neighborhood is still a wilderness, and a mystery, part of that mysterious action of Divine Providence by which we find the sons and daughters of Ireland everywhere.

Her house stands on the very spot on which the chapel of the Fathers stood. It faces to the south, and along the front of the house is a deep ravine running east and west. Along the edge of this ravine, which is eighty rods in length, were the palisades, upright posts, which served to defend the town. A short distance back of her house is the house of her son, who is married, and who works the farm of about fifty acres. During our stay Mrs. James Fox spread out before us, on a plain deal table, many remains or relics of the Indians, many by her husband over forty years ago when digging the foundations of their house, the rims of large copper kettles with the bowled handles still attached, the bodies having rotted away, flat arrow-heads, Indian tobacco pipes, charred bones, charred corn and beans, small colored beads, their wampum or money, an iron tomahawk, four Indian axes made also of iron and bearing the French stamp and many other things. All these had been taken up from a box, into which they had been thrown promiscuously and laid before us.

Twenty four years before, Dr. Tache, the brother of Archbishop Tache, came relics, consisting principally of Indian copper kettles, the whole lot said by the old lady to be worth about \$2,000.00 and placed them in the Paris Exposition.

Looking among the relics I saw some things that were most interesting on account of their most probable connection with the martyrdom of Fathers Brebeuf and L'Allemant, and setting these aside I asked Mrs. Fox if I might have them. She told me to take all I wanted. Making my little selection, which I esteemed of the highest value, I forced upon the good woman a small

offering, for which she would have me take the whole pile. My selection was as follows:

1st. An iron tomahawk, which had back of where the handle, now entirely gone, had been inserted, an iron socket into which must have been fastened a spike or some sharp pointed instrument.

2nd. An iron axe, evidently obtained from the French, with a stamp on each side very much like three Maltese crosses. The face of this axe bears a deep dent. It is said that the Iroquois were always accustomed to dent in this manner all the captured axes of their enemies, as their more civilized followers spike the guns.

But may not this axe be one of those that had been made red hot and strung around the necks of Brebeuf and L'Allemant?

3d. A thimble, an ordinary tailor's thimble of steel, with the mark of clotted blood still upon it, very likely the property of the English, for they were compelled to be their own tailors, and ever prepared to sew up the rents, which the briars and branches through which they passed in their missionary journeys made in their cassocks and clothes.

4th. A pewter smoking pipe. The total length of stem and bowl is four and three fourth inches. The bowl is quite small, being about one inch in diameter at the opening. The marks of the smoker's teeth are quite plain upon the stem. This plainly, could not have been the work of an Indian, and could hardly have been owned by them. It is a facsimile of our common clay pipe, even to the small drop at the bottom of the bowl. Was it Father Brebeuf's?

5th. The bottom of either a small chalice or of a thurible or of an incense boat.

6th. A brass tea-spoon black with age, and somewhat worn at the right hand side near the top as if by frequent contact with the bottom of the cup or bowl, and being about one inch in diameter, going away from their scant meals, like the ancient Persians, hungry.

7th. An Indian arrow-head made from a plate of copper, with the barbed points and short stem between them cut as if by some blunt instrument.

8th. An ordinary Indian pipe bowl made of stone, and a few colored beads or wampum.

The Rev. Father Campbell selected a small sharp piece of iron or steel about the size of a razor blade and just as sharp, which bears strong resemblance to the instrument seen in the hand of the murderer wretch, who in the picture of the martyrdom of Brebeuf and L'Allemant, represents the cutting of a slice of the martyr's flesh and devouring it before his eyes. One thing most certain about these relics is that they were dug up from the very site of the martyrdom of these Fathers, and there is a very strong probability of their being genuine relics of these holy men, who laid down their lives on this hallowed spot in the midst of the most cruel tortures for the sake of Christ their Divine Master.

It would indeed have been most gratifying if the exact spot where stood the stakes where the fathers consumed their lives of sacrifice by the terribly severe agony they endured during that long day and night of the 16th and 17th of March, 1649, could have been pointed out; but we were near enough. Here were all the surroundings of that dread day. Looking back to 1649 we could see the deep foss, its edge lined with the upright posts broken through here and there by the victorious enemy, the smoking ruins of the chapel, the still standing long bark cabins of the Hurons, in which the old men and severely wounded warriors, and young wives and children were confined in dread expectation of their fate, perhaps already tied to the posts where they were to be consumed with their own drelling, the dense wood on the north and west, which shut them off from the view of the valley, where the Mission of St. Louis was already a mass of charred timber and smoking remains of ruined cabins and the retreat of St. Mary's to the northwest whence the Father Superior Father Ragueneau, and his assistants could see the rising smoke and almost hear the savage yells of exultation over the sufferings of the helpless victims.

There is no mark, no chapel, not even a tablet or sign board to tell the chance traveller of the wonderful things done and suffered here for the cause of Christ. It is intended indeed at some future time to erect a chapel on these grounds to commemorate the glorious consummation of lives heroic in the eyes of all the great men, great saints, we may call them, upon this hallowed spot. Here is a grand chance for some one or several of our wealthy Catholic laymen to combine purchase the farm and erect a monument that will keep alive the memory of those holy priests on the spot which was the scene of their martyrdom. After leaving Orillia, where I had received the greatest kindness from Father Campbell, I visited Penetanguishene on whose bay is the landing place of the first missionaries to the Hurons, already described, where the Rev. Father Laboureaux is erecting a large memorial church in honor of the spot where the Huron mission: Daniel, Brebeuf, L'Allemant, Garnier and Chabanel. On the return trip from Penetanguishene to Toronto, the course taken by the Iroquois in their invasion of the Huron Country after they had crossed the mouth of the Niagara river and coasted along the shores of Lake Ontario until they landed in the neighborhood of where Toronto now stands, could be seen. Carrying their canoes some distance inland they struck Holland Run, and paddling and dragging their canoes they came by means of this stream to Lake Simcoe, and then they were in the country of the Hurons, with easy access by water to almost every point.

On the east of the ridge on which the mission of St. Ignace was situated and which runs north and south through the Huron country, the land is generally rolling; but on the west, to the shores of Lake Huron it is flat, sandy, and, in many places, marshy. We may get some idea of what the twenty five Jesuit Fathers, who at one time or another labored in this Huron country, and the four Franciscan, or Recollet, Fathers and one brother, who proceeded then suffered, when we reflect on the severity of the

long winter in these parts, where the thermometer is nearly always below zero, ordinarily from ten to twenty and even thirty. And, when we add to this the piercing chilliness of the winds that blow from the Lakes, and the Huron Country had lakes on the north, east, west; and the poor protection the bark structures of the Hurons afforded; and the scant supplies of clothing and frequently interrupted communication with Quebec, and the intolerable smoke of the fires within the Indian huts, and the shoals of crawling and leaping vermin to which the savages were accustomed and the fitness and the immensity of the Indian habits, we may well conclude that even if these pioneers and devoted servants of God had never shed a drop of their blood they would be well entitled to the honors due to martyrs.

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References: Rev. Father Bayard, St. Basil's, London; Rev. Father Murphy, Ingersoll; Rev. Father O'Meara, Peterborough; Rev. Father Arnold, Montreal.

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