

A Trip to Alaska.

(By Rev. A. Lecorre, O. M. I.)

After my return from Great Bear Lake and Fort Norman, I applied myself to helping Father Seguin in the various labors of the mission. In these far-off regions it is not easy to get workmen to hire, and when they are to be found, the cost of labor is so high that our scanty means does not allow us the luxury of being able to pay for their help. For that reason it is necessary for a missionary priest to be handy at all kinds of manual labor.

Father Seguin himself recognized the truth of the proverb: "Necessity is the mother of invention," for in a short time he became a pretty good joiner and a carpenter. He set me to work with a plane and a saw and I took up the hard task of the good Saint Joseph. Whether or not I succeeded I will not say; anyhow between us both, by hard labor we managed in the space of two and a half months to rear a shelter for our Divine Lord.

The first consideration with a good missionary is, of course, to build a suitable chapel for the Divine Presence; this is the only pride and ambition of the true priest's heart, and so strongly is it rooted in his faith and in the Divine Love that in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles he manages to work marvels with the assistance of the help of God.

So it was with us, and our courage and confidence grew with the height and width of our humble little church.

Our good Brother Kearney struggled to aid us also; he took care of our housework, did our cooking and looked after the ten dogs so precious to us in drawing our sleds. Any spare time he had he came to assist us in the work. We wished to have a garden in which we could raise some potatoes, and as a luxury, some flowers. Although the ground surrounding the Mission was very hard and stony we set to work and planted a keg-full of potatoes which had been given to us at Providence Mission. With hope we watched for the result; expecting that we would be rewarded tenfold by our crop in the fall. Behold, when that time came, with hard work, we pulled out of the ground about a half keg-full of little round balls of potatoes!

At the present day, however, the ground at the mission is much improved and the good Brother is rewarded for his work by a better harvest than we had in these days. In August there came to the Mission a messenger calling upon us to go to a camp of an old woman who was dying. Father Seguin consented to my undertaking this new experience and with a young Indian companion I started forth. To attempt to ascend the Mackenzie River by paddling would be very slow work; the best way to do was to tow the canoe with a rope. We did this, in turn, during the two days of our trip, and I can assure you that it is a wearisome toil, walking thus for hours upon the rough or slippery pebbles of the shore, bending down or grasping the rocky hills to prevent a fall into this foaming stream. I could not help thinking of the horses or the mules which haul the canal boats along the channels of our civilized countries of the smooth, level roads, shaded, perhaps, by trees along which they travel. Yet what a holy deed was to crown our trials; to prepare and to comfort by Divine help and by immortal hopes for the great departure, a poor soul whose lot all her life long had been one of misery and sorrow.

The old woman was lying on the bare floor of earth in the lodge; a ragged piece of blanket covering her. She was in great pain; the only medicine that she had was a drink of fish-broth on a wooden plate, to quench her feverish thirst. Surely, here, there was no reason for regret at leaving the goods of this world; here the soul, free of any tie to earthly things, was ready and glad to answer the supreme call of our Heavenly Father. A last absolution and holy Communion and the poor Indian lodge, visited with His court of angels, became the vestibule of Heaven.

Our return home was as easy and as swift as our ascending had been difficult and slow. We reached the Mission in one day and we brought with us, in our canoe, a large black bear, which we had shot as he was crossing the river. No need here to tell how delighted was Brother Kearney with such a princely addition to his scanty supplies.

September has begun and at that season of the year the most exciting event in these far-away regions is the arrival of the Hudson Bay Co. boats from Portage LaLoche. Up the river as far as possible every eye was searching for the sight of some black, moving speck upon the horizon.

Perhaps, dear reader, you wonder at such eager looks for a boat. Oh, if it were only the merchandise of a fur-trader's cargo, we should not be so anxious; but there is also meaning there in that word, only a lone missionary priest of these remote regions may receive but once or twice a year a letter from his far-off home. The word "mail" brings to his lonely heart a world of remembrances, of hopes, sometimes of dreadful anxieties. Oh, what a longing he has for the "news"; the dear, long-awaited-for news of his beloved land, of his friends, of a hope, home. There may, also, be a hope, that hidden under the cargo there, might be a box addressed to him, containing a treasure for our church.

Do you now realize, dear reader, why our hearts are panting with emotion and with hope when we hear the cry: "The boats are coming." The flag is hoisted to the mast? The two boats of Good Hope and of Peel's River arrived on September 11th, and along with our letters from France and from our families, they brought us His Lordship, Bishop Clut.

I need not say how happy we felt to again see him and to kneel down to receive his blessing. We were saddened and discouraged when he told us that his stay with us would be very short.

"I am," said he, "on my way to Alaska Territory, and will claim a companion from your Mission." Addressing me directly, he said: "Will you, dear Father, follow me?" "Willingly, my Lord, to the end of the world; to death, to heaven, I will follow you."

"Come, then, and prepare yourself. We shall start to-morrow."

Before going further, let me state the reasons which determined such an important step.

A letter coming from Alaska reached Bishop Clut at Providence Mission, and it was signed by Francois Mercier, chief fur trader of the Alaska Fur Co., at St. Michael's, Behring Strait. Mr. Mercier was a Canadian and a sound Catholic. His brother, who was also engaged in the fur trade, resided at Fort Yukon.

The two brothers longed to have the Missionary Fathers reside amongst them, and to have their ministrations in that immense field of infidelity. Owing to their endeavors generous offers of help had been made by the management of the headquarters at San Francisco. Such was the information addressed to Bishop Clut. It was evident that in delaying to accept such a kind offer it might be disastrous to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls. The chief agents of the Company were Protestants, and although well disposed and giving us the preference, they would, perhaps, if we refused, change their minds and call for ministers of their own creed to take our places. Catholic faith would then have lost a glorious conquest.

His Lordship did not hesitate at all; whatever might be the chances of success, the difficulties and the hardships of such a long journey, he heeded them not.

His ardent zeal urged him forward, and he started at once. Our preparations were made in a very short time. We should have to cross afoot, the Rocky Mountains, with our luggage packed upon our backs, so the least possible weight was the best. Our good Father Seguin engaged two young Indians of the Loucheux tribe to go with us to Fort Yukon. They would carry for us our missionary chapel and our little stock of supplies; still with our bags and blankets and with my inseparable gun, we should have quite enough to carry. Our first intention was to take passage on the boat on Peel's River, but a minister named Mr. Bompas and the wife of the clerk of that Trading Post, had already secured the narrow space on board.

We well knew their open hostility towards our missionary Fathers and we wisely withdrawing any friction with them by withdrawing from their company.

The good Mr. Gaudet, seeing our difficulty, came to our rescue by conceding to us a fine birch-canoe in which we could be comfortable and at our ease.

On the morning of the 13th, of September, we started, while the bell of our church, as usual, rang out a parting God-speed to His Lordship. Owing to the swiftness of the current and to the vigorous heartiness of our two young Indians, on the morning of the 16th, we had cleared 180 miles of the Mackenzie River and were at the mouth of the Peel's River, which is the last but one of the tributaries emptying into the great stream before it flows, 60 miles further, by numerous channels into the Arctic ocean.

Beginning at this zone, by degrees, the forests disappear.

On the left-hand side of the river you can see the first heights of the Rocky Mountains and on the right-hand side immense barren grounds intersected by clusters of willows and covered with a kind of lichen-moss. These barren grounds are the favorite resort, during summer, of the reindeer and of the musk-oxen.

The river we were now to ascend on our way to the Hudson Bay Co. Post gets its name from an old English Captain, Sir Peel, who is reported to have discovered it. But our old Canadian explorers who were as witty as they were brave, have played upon the name; and if you should ask our half-breeds what is the name of the river, they will tell you: "It is Pelly River."

"Why so?"

Because the ice, in breaking up in the Springtime has peeled (in French, pelé, i.e. PELLAY) the willows and the poplars off its banks!

When we put ashore and prepared our breakfast, an Eskimo family, landing from their section's boat, did likewise on the opposite shore of the river.

It was the first time that His Lordship and I had met with these people of the Northern sea-shores and our curiosity was awakened.

The river at this point was quite narrow, so that we could easily follow all their movements.

Later on, the series of my sketches will bring me to a detailed description of the history and of the manners of these people.

The exhibition which they gave us that morning was sufficient of itself to convince us of their wretchedness and of their savagery.

Two more days of paddling brought us to Peel's River Fort.

Like a few other forts of the Hudson Bay Co. this one seemed to claim its designation from the wooden ramparts or rather fences which surround its log-buildings and pretend to protect them against an armed attack of the Eskimos.

A poor protection, indeed, which an ignited fogot could destroy within an hour. In this place we were now in the very citadel of Protestant fanaticism.

A minister of the Anglican sect had settled himself there.

By force and following the example of the English clerk of the Post, he had married a girl of the Loucheux tribe.

He had succeeded, by means of presents and of threats, in prevailing upon a small number of the Indians who traded their furs at the Post, to form with himself, a shadow of an Anglican congregation.

The very day that this minister landed at Good Hope on his way to Peel's River Father Seguin wishing to prevent, at any cost, his evil designs amongst the poor ignorant Indians who had never seen our missionary Fathers, asked for a passage on the same boat.

He was roughly refused.

From the Headquarters at London, England, strict orders had been sent to the Posts on Mackenzie River, not to allow any Catholic missionary to reside at Peel's River; and to hold that station as a central church for the propagation of the "True Gospel."

It was by such means that Protestantism succeeded in planting itself at

Peel's River.

However, in the following Spring, Father Seguin, ever alert, bought a canoe and starting down the river, built a small log-house at the mouth of a little river, called the Red River, which empties into the Mackenzie River, very close to Peel's River. He made himself familiar with the Loucheux dialect and very soon his undaunted zeal was crowned with great success.

The Indians loved to gather around our dwelling during the month that we stayed there for some years.

Now, as I recall these reminiscences of the past, it is good to know that the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, as it was named, the most advanced towards the Arctic seas, is also one of the most fruitful.

The majority of the Loucheux Indians are now converted and are sincerely attached to the Catholic Faith. After the muries of Divine Grace and the zealous apostleship of Father Seguin, the success of that mission is due in a great measure to the persevering zeal of a poor old woman of the Loucheux tribe.

She was the mother of the wife of the clerk at the Hudson Bay Co. post. Far from sharing the bigotry and the hatred of her daughter against our priests, she declared herself the humble champion of the truth and of virtue. Unceasingly, she urged her countrymen to go and visit the true man of prayer, and to love and to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She taught Father Seguin and myself the Loucheux dialect; and when our lesson was over she would always go to the poor little chapel and piously recite her beads. Her rosary, which she kept to the last, a very old relic, almost worn out, broken in several parts and tied together with leather strings, was her only and her dearest inheritance to give to her youngest grandson, as she lay upon her death-bed of spruce branches. This precious gift she placed in his hands with a smile of heavenly joy, her soul went back to God.

The above article will give the readers of this paper an idea of the difficulties which a priest encounters in his work amongst the Indians; of the opposition which he meets and of the heroic self-sacrifice he is called upon to exercise in order to bring the Faith to souls for whom Christ died.

A money offering is always of great assistance to a missionary priest. It will be of help to him, who has so little of this world's goods, for he has left all to follow Christ.

Clothing, either new or in good condition, if second hand, can be sent to Father Lecorre, and will be distributed among the poor. Indians who come in great numbers to the mission at Duck Lake, hoping to get there some garment to shield them from the terrible cold of that severe climate. The hunting grounds of the Indians are now being reduced in size owing to the settlements of the whites. This chief means of the Indian to support himself and his family is gradually disappearing. When he cannot get the furs to trade in exchange for merchandise, his family and himself must suffer for the lack of food and clothing. This winter they are very much discouraged. Recently two old women travelled sixty miles through the woods to get to St. Michael's School in order to beg there of the Fathers a skirt or some kind of a garment to cover their worn bodies. The good priests are always happy when they get a box of clothing from a reader of this paper. They distribute the clothing amongst the poor men, women and children who come from the woods, miles away, to get it.

The Fathers also carry bundles of it with them when they visit their many missions in the Indian camps, and they give it to the suffering people.

Gather up whatever you can and send it, by freight, to the priest. It will be of much use to some poor person and it will preach to the people a lesson of practical charity.

Address for clothing and letters: Rev. Father A. Lecorre, O.M.I., St. Michael's School, Duck Lake, Sask., Canada.

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The Fortunate Fasters.

Judging from the more recent researches of modern science into the physiological economy of nutrition, it begins to look as if the Catholics who, during the Lenten season, deserve to be pitied are not those who fast and abstain, but those who avail themselves of the dispensation from fasting and abstinence. With all the talk one hears of the stress and strain of modern life and the consequent impracticability of observing to the letter the Church's general Lenten law, it is extremely doubtful whether exemption from that law is a thing to be thankful for. In any case, the following paragraph from the New York Freeman's Journal

constitutes just now very timely reading:

"Lord Kelvin reached the patriarchal age of eight-four as the result of a life of temperance; and, though not a Catholic, it was known that he observed the Lenten fasts of our Church, and abstained when his engagements permitted it on every Friday. The late Sir Henry Thompson, a surgeon of European note, was accustomed to recommend high-living patients to spend the Lenten season in Italy or France in out-of-the-way villages, where he was morally certain they would willy-nilly have to submit to a fish regime. Though he was confessedly an atheist, and abused most systems of religion, it was his custom to say that the Catholic Church was the only one which took charge of man's body and soul by giving each the diet which was especially suited to it. He was on terms of intimacy with the Carthusians of Amminster, who, he said, by their treatment of some of the patients he frequently rusticated to their great convent in Sussex, brought about recoveries which he, with all his science, could not have effected. He held that no man could long remain healthy who did not usually rise from the table still somewhat hungry. He recommended all who studied, or who led sedentary lives, to abstain from meat at least three days in the week substituting for flesh meat a diet of eggs or fish.

"Nor was his custom of fasting and abstinence unknown to the pagans, who were, on the contrary, well aware of the beneficial action it produced not only upon the body but upon the mind. Fasting, says Cicero, is the best method of restraining the violence of one's passions. The man who can master the appetite for strong drinks and rare viands has mastered the secret of happiness in life."

On the question of diet, as on many another, the world is discovering that the Church, which is the oldest living entity within its confines, is wiser than her critics—and than some of her unmortified children, too.

been many pills put upon the market and pressed upon public attention, but none has endured so long or met with so much favor as Parmentier's Vegetable Pills. Widespread use of them has attested their great value, and they need no further advertisement than this. Having firmly established themselves in public esteem, they now rank without a peer in the list of standard vegetable preparations.

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The Church is sadly needed, for at present I am obliged to SAY MASSES and give Benediction in a Garret. My average weekly collection is only 3s 6d, and I have no endowment except HOPE.

What can I do alone? Very little. But with your co-operation and that of the other well-disposed readers of this paper, I can do all that needs to be done.

In these days, when the faith of many is becoming weak, when the Church is everywhere being undermined, and is about to treat Our Divine Lord Himself as it treated His Holy Church, the Catholic Faith is renewing its youth in England and bidding fair to obtain possession of the hearts of the English people again. I have a very up-hill struggle here on behalf of this Faith. I must succeed or else this vast district must be abandoned.

IT RESTS WITH YOU

to say whether I am to succeed or fail. All my hopes of success are in your co-operation. Will you not extend a co-operating hand? Surely you will not refuse? You may not be able to help much, indeed. But you can help a little, and a multitude of "littles" means a great deal.

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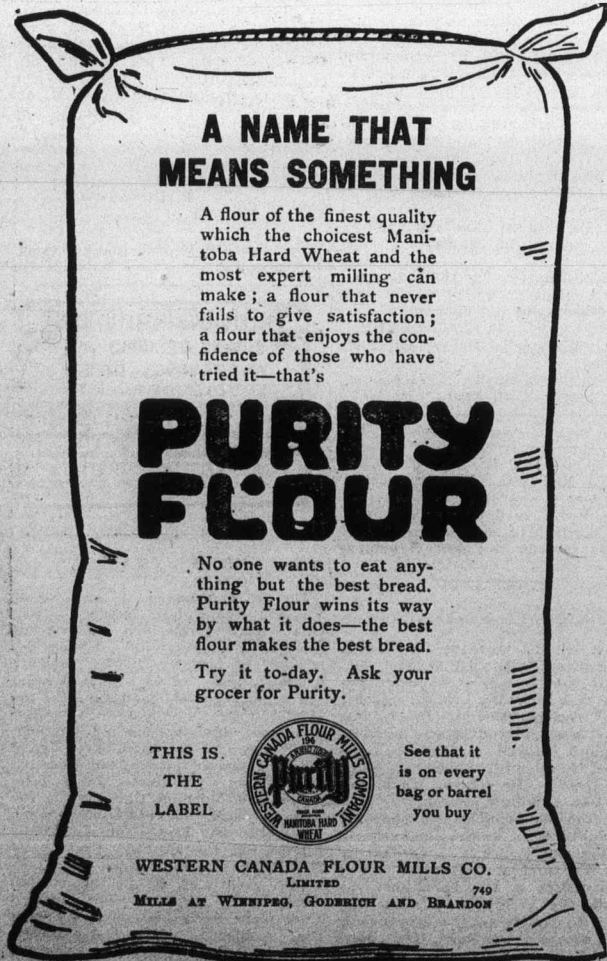
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The meadow hillsides beyond way for a hillside you house. But in, to where side the wind and looked where the chin chin sowin were a drag it as if they work upon the crabs.

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Don't a Co

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It is witho Coughs, Cold Pain in the Cough, Quins Throat and L A single do Fine Syrup w throat, and if some settled properties of proclaim its radiating heat use of the about a compl Do not be l called Norway and insist on get up in a twice the trade Mrs. Henry writes: "I ha Fine Syrup in years and I known for the all my childr