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HISTORY OF CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE WEST

Interesting and Valuable Historic Sketch of Conditions in Western Canada

The story of the deeds of daring and heroism, the adventures and hardships, the successes and failures often ending in tragic deaths of the early Canadian explorers and missionaries gives ample scope for the pen of the historian. Although much has been written on the subject much still remains to be written as new material is being collected and new facts being brought to light.

"The History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada" in two volumes by the Rev. A. S. Morice, O. M. I. of Winnipeg, and dedicated to his grace the most reverend L. P. Adair, Archbishop of St. Boniface, records what the Catholic church has done in this immense region, from the time, when in the year 1723, Father Mesurier first saw the lake of the Woods, up to the year 1908.

The history of the Roman Catholic church is so inseparably associated with the history of Western Canada, that a history of one is largely a history of the other.

Although as would naturally be expected from so ardent a churchman, Rev. Father Morice in dealing with certain phases of his subject, may be inclined to be somewhat prejudiced in favor of his church, still on the whole the book gives a dispassionate account of and throws new light on many momentous events which transpired during the period with which he deals. The book will therefore be eagerly read by many who may differ from the author both in religion and in his deductions for its wealth of historical information.

Rev. Father Morice in the compilation of his book was especially fortunate in having had access to sources of information that were denied to former historians of that period and in places his narrative differs materially from theirs.

It will be found however that the outline of the events are similar, the principal difference being in the conclusions arrived at and the different

view points which the events are looked at by the historians. The earnest student of the history of Western Canada will after reading these differing reports be better able to judge as to which is the correct one.

Rev. Father Morice writes in a very pleasing and polished style and with an earnestness which carries conviction as to his belief in the truth of what he writes.

Typographically the book is almost perfect and the numerous illustrations are high class specimens of the engraver's art.

In the opening chapters, Rev. Father Morice describes in graphic detail the condition of the country and of its warlike and unsophisticated inhabitants at the time of the advent of the early French explorers and Catholic missionaries, among the first of whom were Radisson, Verendrye, St. Pierre, Father Mesurier, Aulneau, Coquart and others, who about the middle of the eighteenth century pushed their way westward from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, establishing forts and preaching to the Indian tribes.

Calgary 150 Years Ago

It may be interesting to the people of Calgary to learn that as long ago as 1751, the junction of the Bow and Elbow rivers was considered an advantageous place for the establishment of a trading post by the explorer St. Pierre. In giving an account of the explorations of St. Pierre, Rev. Father Morice says: "Ten of his men ascended the Saskatchewan and built a spacious fort on the Bow river, just where Calgary now stands, May 23, 1751, which became known as Fort La Jonquiere but was never utilized in spite of the abundant stores left within its walls."

"The commander then undertook to go and join De Niverville, but he learned on the way that the Indians who were to accompany him in his proposed explorations, a party that counted forty or forty-five tepees and had camped in the near proximity of Fort La Jonquiere had been treacherously massacred to a man by Assiniboines. St. Pierre learning of this had nothing left but to retrace his steps."

The site of this old Fort La Jonquiere was where the present Mounted Police Barracks stand but no trace of the old fort remains. The stores probably were looted and the fort burned by the Assiniboines. The first attempt to establish Catholic missions among the Indian tribes of the Canadian North

West proved a failure and the church retired from the mission field to await the time when the work could again be taken up under more advantageous auspices. Which came a few years later.

In his account of the struggles between the Hudson Bay company and its rival the North West company for the fur trade of the Northwest, Father Morice shows a decided preference for the latter company, doubtless owing to its having been a Canadian company and to its greater friendliness to the church.

Missionary Activity Renewed

The founding of the Red River colony by Lord Selkirk in 1811 and 12, opened the way for a renewal of activity in missionary work and from that time up to the present the Catholic church has been one of the great factors in the civilizing and christianizing of the Indian tribes as well as in extending its missions to every part of the country to minister to the spiritual needs of the white settlers and the halfbreed settlements on the plains. Its work has not been accomplished without great self sacrifice on the part of its missionaries and priests and Father Morice records many bloody tragedies in which these devoted pioneers of the Cross did not hesitate to give up their lives for the cause which they preached. Fear of cold, hunger, contagion, hostile Indians, or sectional jealousy never deterred such men as Mgr. Tache, Bishops Provencher, Grandin, Leduc, Fathers Lacombe, Ducoit, Grouard and many other pioneers of the Cross, from their work of spreading the gospel of peace among the natives from the Arctic Circle to the International boundary.

Red River Troubles of 1870

It is in his dealing with secular and political questions that many will not agree with Father Morice's history. In his account of the troubles that agitated the little world of Red River in 1869-70 he says:

"We cannot without forfeiting our claim to truth and honesty conceal the fact that Catholics were the main-spring of the whole movement and we will admit without the least difficulty that in this they had the sympathy of their clergy."

In justification of this and the actions of the provisional government formed by Louis Riel, he quotes from a number of protestant and official authorities, who held the same views.

He refutes the charges of disloyalty made against Riel and his compatriots and affirms that the "rebels" were at all times ready to lay down their arms on being assured that their rights would not be interfered with and that the French and half breeds proved the work of the church in the social and religious improvement of the people.

This loyalty to Great Britain, he says the French and half breeds proved at the time of the Fenian raid of 1871 when had it not been for them there was grave danger of the whole of Western Canada passing from under the sovereignty of Great Britain.

Rebellion of 1885

The dissatisfaction of the people of the Saskatchewan, Indians as well as halfbreeds, which culminated in the rebellion of 1885, he attributes to the criminal negligence of the Ottawa authorities, who were in reality responsible for the outbreak. In proof that the Catholic priests used every means in their power to prevent the illadvised insurrection and thereby incurred the hostility of Riel and his followers, Father Morice points to the fact that in it two Catholic priests lost their lives; another had been seriously wounded; Father Paquette had remained in constant danger of death from the half breeds and Indians; Fathers Cochon and Logoff had been dragged from place to place by rebellious natives; other priests had been kept prisoners at Batoche and finally seven of the Catholic churches and missionary establishments had been utterly destroyed and their valuables stolen.

Father Morice considers that Riel's action was the result of a diseased mind and that on questions of religion and politics he was insane at the time. His execution he concludes "must therefore be looked on in the light of a miscarriage of justice." Father Morice will however have difficulty in convincing his readers in whose minds the events of the rebellion of 1885 are still fresh that the execution of a man who was the cause of so much loss of life and so much trouble and expense, was a miscarriage of justice.

The Manitoba school act he characterizes as "a campaign of persecution and an act of spoliation" and a contravention of the "Bill of Rights" guaranteed to the Catholic minority by the federal parliament at the time that Manitoba entered confederation. Establishment of Missions in Calgary

In speaking of the establishment of the Catholic mission at Calgary, Father Morice says that before the arrival of the Mounted Police, the Oblates had started a station some twenty miles therefrom. Realizing the importance which the military post was likely to assume they transported themselves to its immediate vicinity, forming through the instrumentality of Father Ducoit the embryo of a new mission, which they put under the patronage of Our Lady of Peace.

"As late as December 25, 1878, the prospective mission had as yet neither church nor chapel, the services being held in a private house, though henceforth the place constantly enjoyed the ministrations of religion."

He further notes the arrival in Calgary on July 26, 1886, of twelve Companions of Jesus to found a convent school who have since given a superior education in English, French, etc.

The Grey Nuns
Father Morice pays a deserved tribute to the good work of the Sisters of Charity, commonly known as the Grey Nuns, from the color of their habit.

the first two of whom Sisters Lagrave and Lafrance, arrived at St. Francis Xavier in 1886 and established a school for the children of the locality. It was afterwards decided to establish the Grey Nuns in each of the Oblate missions. Not only did they teach the young, but they reared the orphans, treated the sick, took care of the sacrifices and were ever ready to assist in any way to the best of their abilities, the work of the church in the social and religious improvement of the people.

Statistics of Catholics in Western Canada

Father Morice gives the Catholic population of the western dioceses today as follows: St. Boniface, 123,000, of whom about 45,000 belong to the Rutenian rite; St. Albert, 52,108, of whom 12,750 are Rutenians; Prince Albert, 44,000 with 12,000 Rutenians; Vancouver 25,000; Victoria, 12,000; Yukon about 2,500.

It is impossible in a brief newspaper article to even touch briefly on the numerous subjects dealt with in the forty-three chapters of Father Morice's history of the Catholic church in Western Canada, which is the most comprehensive work yet published in regard to church work in the Canadian Northwest.

It is a first hand book and its contents are original and not a rehash of matter already published. The subject was a wide one and has been treated in a broad spirit.

To the Roman Catholics, the book will appeal as a comprehensive history of their church and its missionary work, written by one who has spent many years in missionary work in the west; to the student of purely secular history the book will furnish a reliable source of the discoveries and explorations of the west, a great deal of which has never before been published.

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GREAT BRITAIN'S HOLD UPON THE SUEZ CANAL

Egyptian Assembly Rejects Proposal For Renewal of Concession

Cairo, May 6.—The Egyptian Assembly has by a vote of sixty-six to one rejected the government's proposal for a renewal of the Suez canal concession in 1898.

Before submitting the proposal to the assembly, the government and the company had been negotiating for some time. The government finally decided to submit to the assembly's decision, with the result that the scheme was rejected.

The concession of the Suez Canal Company expires on November 17, 1898. The proposed convention provided that the concession should be prolonged for an additional forty years to the end of 1908. The company was

to pay the government \$20,000,000 in four equal annual instalments beginning on December 15, 1910; from 1911 the government was to receive a proportion of the net revenue, rising from four per cent in 1921 to twelve per cent in the years 1961-68.

From January 1, 1909, to the expiration of the prolonged concession in 1908 the net revenue was to be divided equally between the company and the government on the following plan:

When below \$10,000,000 the whole was to go to the company; when between \$10,000,000 and \$20,000,000, \$10,000,000 was to be divided equally between the company and the government; when above \$20,000,000 it was to be divided equally between the company and the government; the receipts of the Egyptian state by article 23 of the present convention. From the same date the government was to be represented on the board of administration by three members.

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