



"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

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WITH THE COMMISSION.

TRAVELS OF GOVERNMENT TREATY EXPEDITIONS TO THE NORTH—FATHER LACOMBE HONORED.

Free Press Special.

Lesser Slave Lake, Athabasca, June 26.—My last letter dated the 1st inst. was written from Athabasca Landing. On Saturday, the 3rd inst., all the supplies and baggage of the royal commission had arrived from Edmonton, and at 3 o'clock p.m. the bugle sounded the signal for the departure for Lesser Slave Lake, a distance of 225 miles. I may add for the information of your readers that in this north-west part of the country Indians and halfbreeds reckon distances by the days. Our guides will tell us that in so many days we will be at the mouth of a certain river, and the number of miles to get to that specified point does not seem to occupy their mind at all. The members of the commission, numbering 12, took passage on board a York boat. Hon. Jas. Ross, one of the Indian commissioners, travelled by land from Edmonton, in order to look over some public works being done along that route by the government of the Territories. At the Landing we met His Lordship Bishop Grouard, of Athabasca-Mackenzie, who happened to be there. He accepted the kind invitation of Hon. Mr. Laird and was the guest of the commission to this place. His Lordship furnished the commission with valuable information about the Indians of the north, having labored among them during the last 37 years. Two barges followed our York boat. One contained our supplies and baggages and an escort of ten men of the Northwest Mounted police under command of Inspector Snyder, while Mr. R. B. Round, superintendent of transport for the Hudson's Bay company, occupied the other embarkation.

"TRACKING"

Although the weather has been very disagreeable during the trip, we travelled without interruption with the exception of the next day after our departure, which we spent at Baptiste Creek on account of the heavy rain. The bad weather made "tracking" very arduous for the boatmen. This expression "tracking" will not be understood by your readers, except by old timers and a few who have travelled up the Athabasca, Lesser Slave Lake, Peace, Mackenzie and all rivers of the north. In order to go up these streams when the current runs five miles an hour, to each boat must be attached a rope, to which sometimes as many as many as eight men pull with leather belts made of portage straps. From early in the morning until evening these men, who are mostly Indians belonging to the Cree tribe and French and English halfbreeds, are harnessed to these ropes. Tracking is sometimes done under very difficult circumstances, particularly when the water is high. The banks of the rivers being bordered with trees and dead timber the trackers have to climb over these obsta-

cles. I have seen our men in the water to their neck and in the mud to their waist, pulling along during the whole day. In the rapids, which are very numerous for a distance of 25 miles in the Lesser Slave River, progress is very slow. At a place called "Ile à la Bouteille" on that river, our three boats were stuck in the rapids. The York boat had about passed the obstruction when the rope broke. The current being very swift at that place, the boat drifted at the mercy of the wind until we struck a rock in the middle of the river. The two other boats met the same fate. This incident caused a sensation in the party. Baptiste Peagous, one of the trackers, came to our rescue with a big rope, and, with the aid of 24 men, the boats were all landed safely above the rapids. Unfortunately the old Indian who had risked his life to save our own lives and boats, when walking on a dead tree near the shore,

SLIPPED AND FELL

on his right side. Dr. West, physician of the commission, was present and attended him. This old Indian's father was a Cree, and his mother belonged to the Blackfoot tribe. He is very well liked by everybody, being a very good natured old fellow. He takes pride in relating his exploits at the time he was stealing horses and scalping his enemies. Since the missionaries came to this country, and he has become a Christian, he stopped his life of pillage and murder. I was fortunate in having my kodak at hand with me, and I took two snap shots of the scene in the rapids.

Boatmen were scarce at the Landing. The crews who were to meet us there could not leave Lesser Slave Lake on account of the ice, which only broke up on May 4. On the second day, the Northwest Mounted Police boys volunteered to track their own boat. During our trip to Lesser Slave Lake which lasted 16 days, it rained continually except for two days. All the day long rain poured on us and sometimes it was very cold. When the hour for camping would come in the evening we had to climb up the banks of rivers and find a spot where to pitch our tents. The wet weather caused the indisposition of a few members of the commission.

On the 15th inst. at Baptiste Creek we met Mr. Dibble, D. L. S., and party, who were returning from Peace River. At 4:30 every morning the bugle sounded the reveille, and for several seconds after the echo of the forest was repeating

THE SWEET STRAINS.

Often in half an hour we have raised camp, taken breakfast, and the boats were ready to leave. The commission was due to arrive at Lesser Slave Lake on the 8th inst., but owing to the late opening of navigation on the lake, as I stated before, our boatmen could not come to meet us at the Landing, and being short of men, also on account of the extremely bad weather, we were 11 days late in arriving at our destination.

At 6 o'clock on the evening of the 10th inst. we had reached the mouth of the Lesser Slave River, where we camped near the storehouse of the Hudson's Bay company, 75 or 80 miles from Athabasca Landing. Since we left the latter place this was

the first habitation we saw. It is made of logs and covered with bark, and during the summer months it is not occupied. The following day we met a canoe containing five men, who told us the Indians were coming in large numbers to meet the commission at the lake. On the 12th and 13th we passed through the rapids, which are very numerous, and at several places dangerous.

A MEMORABLE DAY.

Tuesday, the 13th inst., will long be remembered by the members of the commission. During the whole day we went up rapids and at times danger was imminent. That evening we camped at the mouth of the Sauter river where there was a large piece of clear land sufficient to pitch our tents. It was the 50th anniversary of Father Lacombe's ordination as a priest. Great preparations had been made in Montreal and other cities to fittingly celebrate this golden anniversary, but the old missionary whose influence is so great among the Indians of the north, yielded to the solicitations of the government and accepted an invitation to accompany the royal commission as advisor. It was given to us to celebrate this happy event. After supper Hon. Mr. Laird, accompanied by all the members of the commission, proceeded to Rev. Father Lacombe's tent and in the name of all present congratulated him on the occasion of his golden jubilee and requested Mr. J. A. J. McKenna, Indian commissioner, to read an address, which he handed to him. It was written on birch bark and signed by all present. Following is the text: To the Very Reverend Father A. Lacombe, O. M. I., Vicar General of St. Albert.

Dear Father Lacombe,—We cannot allow this the golden anniversary of your Apostolic marriage to pass without expressing our cordial congratulations on the completion of a cycle made so glorious by constant labor for love of humanity and zeal for the Great Master's glory.

While the medium of expression is altogether inadequate, and there is an absence of the pomp and ceremony, the music and the eulogy which would have marked the day had not your keen sense of duty led you to undertake this arduous and hazardous mission to facilitate the making of a treaty with the Indians of the north; it seems to us that there is a fitness in the circumstances of this celebration which harmonizes with your 50 years of missionary toil.

The mass in the little tent in the chill of the early morning, the chanting of Indian hymns, the rough breakfast rudely served, the perils in the rapids, the discomforts on the land, typify a life which will make the most interesting and edifying chapter in our country's history. The title of that chapter will be "Père Lacombe."

We assure you that we highly appreciate the privilege of having you as a companion, and that we shall ever cherish the memory of days of dreary travel made bright by your delightful reminiscences, and days of sunshine made more joyous by your genial converse.

We beg you to accept this humble testimony of our regard and esteem, with our sincere wish that the Master may grant that our country may continue

for many years to be blessed by your presence and your labors. Signed by D. Laird, P. C. and Indian commissioner; E. Grouard, O.M.I. Bishop of Ibora, Vicar-Apostolic of Athabasca, Mackenzie, guest of the royal commission; J. A. J. McKenna, Indian treaty commissioner; James Walker, halfbreed commissioner; J. Arthur Côté, halfbreed commissioner; Harrison S. Young, secretary to Indian treaty commission; J. F. Prud'homme, secretary to halfbreed commission; J. W. Martin, assistant secretary to Indian treaty commission; Chas. Mair, assistant secretary to halfbreed commission; C. H. West, M.D., physician to commission; A. E. Snyder, inspector in command of escort; P. D'Eschambault, interpreter and intermediary; H. A. Conroy, accountant for commission; H. B. Round, superintendent of transport for H. B. Co. Lesser Slave Lake, June 13th, 1899.

Father Lacombe was moved to tears, and spoke as follows: Gentlemen and dear friends, you have really taken me by surprise. I did not expect that you would be so kind as to make for me such a friendly demonstration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of my ordination as a priest. Of course such a thing is very dear and pleasant to me. Your address, so well fitted for the occasion, rejoices me a great deal, and reminds me of the times past. Being camped on the banks of the Athabasca river on our way to make treaties, in the name of the government, with the Indians of the north, is a great event in my missionary life. Being attached to your commission, since the time we left Winnipeg, I am satisfied to say that I am with friends, who do their best to help me along during this arduous trip, in my old age.

Before leaving Ottawa the Hon. Mr. Sifton, minister of the interior, promised that, considering the hardships we would probably have to contend with, and also my old age, the commission would give me all the comfort at their disposal to make the trip for me as easy as possible. Till now I can say that I have fully received this comfort. Every one of you has done his best to help me this way. In such a trip it is required that every one will do his best to live in harmony and concord, and this has been done as I can see. It is a good omen for the future. It cannot be otherwise when we have at our head a gentleman who has given example by his good humor to all of us during this arduous and perilous trip, by his patience, politeness and kindness. Before Hon. Mr. Laird came to Manitoba I had been informed by the Archbishop of Halifax that we would be pleased with his appointment as Indian commissioner. Now to-day I am glad to state, after my acquaintance with him, that he is the right man in the right place. Therefore, governor, for your presence here this evening, and all the members of the commission, I thank you for this demonstration. I will keep this address and poem written on birch bark as a very dear souvenir."

Rev. Father Lacombe also said a few words in French in reply to a poem from the pen of Mr. J. A. Côté, halfbreed commissioner. Like the address, the poem was

engrossed on birch bark by Mr. J. F. Prud'homme, secretary of the halfbreed commission. The rest of the evening was agreeably spent listening to the venerable missionary, relating his experience among the several Indian tribes of the north. In the meantime we enjoyed good Havana cigars, which he presented to everyone. It was late in the evening when we retired to our tents.

The proceedings of the next few days must be reserved for another letter.

ATHABASCA.

ITALY AND IRELAND.

Catholic Standard and Times.

Two items of news from Italy speak volumes for the present drift of thought and the tendency of events. One is the fact that the Italian Parliament, because it would not pass Government bills to further gag the press and muzzle debate in the Chambers, was forcibly dissolved by Humbert's new tool, General Pelloux, and by Royal decree the bills were made law! The other is, that in the Roman municipal elections, for the first time since the seizure of the city by the Sardinians, the candidates representing the Vatican have secured the majority.

If we may believe the cable dispatches from Europe—which we by no means say we do—Archbishop Ireland has joined the ranks of those who see bliss in the "Anglo-Saxon" alliance. He is also reported as having delivered an oration in praise of peace which sounds somewhat strange when contrasted with another oration pointing out the beneficial effects of war upon the national character, delivered at a Republican gathering last year. One needs, however, to be cautious about accepting rough telegraphic synopses of the utterances of such a versatile and many-sided personage as Archbishop Ireland. When the authentic report arrives it may present his views in a widely different light.

MONKS ON THE WHEEL.

The unwonted spectacle of monks riding bicycles may now be daily witnessed in Essex, England. The Franciscan Fathers who have charge of the new mission at Baintree have also to attend to the spiritual needs of two other missions at long distances, and, in order that they may accomplish this work, they have, with the permission of Cardinal Vaughan, invested in the purchase of machines on which they ride from one mission to another.

THE LATEST MALAPROPISM

This really happened last week at the Manitoba Club. They were talking about the hardships our soldiers underwent during the Zulu war. Remembering the trials of those brave fellows in their fenced camp (zereba), one gentleman oracularly exclaimed: "They must have had a fearfully hot time inside that zebra." The listeners had a hard time keeping a straight face.

Last Saturday the Winnipeg thermometers registered 96 degrees in the shade.