

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.

THE LETTERS OF FATHER EMANUEL CRESPEL.

MISSIONARY EXPERIENCES IN CANADA DURING THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

[NOTE:—The letters in which Father Crespel relates his experience as a missionary in Canada, are eight in number, written at the request of his brother, who was desirous of possessing the particulars of so eventful a period of his life. They are, moreover, of considerable historical value, giving in simple yet entertaining language, a description of the country, and those portions in particular which relate to what is now the Province of Ontario, will, we are sure, be received with interest by the readers of the REVIEW. Father Crespel was for some time stationed at Niagara, as will appear in his narrative, and he traversed the whole country from there to Detroit. He also spent some time on the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers, and, indeed, his wanderings led him into all parts of the Province, so that it may be imagined how indefatigable and tireless a missionary he was. We are not aware that these letters have hitherto appeared in print, except in a small quarterly magazine published in New York, called *The Pilgrim of Palestine*, to whom we are indebted for them. In the spelling of Indian proper names the original of Father Crespel has been adhered to, although in many cases they are not strictly correct.—ED.]

LETTER I. (Concluded).

On the 14th of the same month we continued our route to the Chicago bend, and, while crossing thence to Death-cape, which is five leagues off, a squall surprised us and drove on shore several of the canoes which failed to double a point and reach shelter. They were dashed to pieces, and were obliged to distribute in the other canoes the men who, by the greatest happiness in the world, had all escaped the danger. The next day we crossed the Menomonees, to invite the tribe to oppose our landing; they fell into the trap and were entirely defeated.

We encamped on the following day at the mouth of a river, called la Gasparde. Here our Indians entered the woods and soon brought in several deer; this game is very common at this place, and we accordingly laid in a stock for some days.

On the 17th, at noon, we halted till evening, so as to reach the post at Green Bay only at night. We wished to surprise the enemy, whom we knew to be among the Sacs, their allies, whose village is near Fort St. Francis. We began our march in darkness, and at midnight reached the mouth of Fox River, where our fort is built. As soon as we got there, Mr. De Lignerie sent some Frenchmen to the Commandant to know whether there were really any of the enemy in the Sac village; and learning there must be, he sent all his Indians and a detachment of the French over the river to surround the village, and ordered the rest of the troops to enter it. With all our precautions to conceal our approach, the enemy were aware of it, and all escaped but four. These were made a present to our Indians, who, after amusing themselves with them, shot them to death with arrows.

I witnessed with pain this horrible sight, and could not reconcile with the sentiments of the Indians, as expressed a few days before, the pleasure they took in tormenting these wretches by making them undergo a hundred deaths before depriving them of life. I would have liked to ask them whether they did not perceive as well as I this contrariety, and show them what I saw blameable in their course, but all who could act as interpreters for me were on the other side of the river, and I was obliged to defer satisfying my curiosity to some other time. After this little *coup de main* we ascended Fox River, which is full of rapids and has a course of thirty five or forty leagues.

On the 24th of August we reached the Winnebago village, well disposed to destroy all whom we should find there, but their flight had preceded our arrival, and all we could do was to burn their cabins and ravage their

fields of Indian corn, which affords them their principal nourishment. We then crossed Little Fox Lake, at the end of which we encamped, and the next day, the Feast of St. Louis, we entered after mass into a little river, which led us to a kind of marsh, on the banks of which lies the chief village of those whom we sought. Their allies, the Sacs, had doubtless warned them of our approach; they did not think proper to wait for us and we found in their village only some women, whom our Indians made slaves, and an old man, whom they burnt at the stake without any apparent repugnance at the commission of such a barbarous action. This cruelty seemed more marked to me than that which they had exercised against the four Indians whom they had taken in the Sac town. I availed myself of this occasion and circumstance to satisfy the curiosity which I mentioned a moment ago.

One of the Frenchmen understood the Iroquois language. I begged him to tell the Indians that I was surprised to see them take so much pleasure in tormenting a wretched old man, that the right of war did not extend so far, and that such barbarity seemed to me to belie the principles which they had seemed to entertain for old men. An Iroquois answered, and, to justify his comrades, said, that when they fell into the hands of the Sacs and Foxes they received still more cruel treatment, and that it was their custom to treat their enemies as they themselves would be treated if conquered.

I would have wished to know this Indian's language, to show him myself what was defective and blameable in his reasoning; but I had to content myself with representing to him that nature, and particularly religion, required us to be humane to each other, that moderation should direct us in everything; that the pardon and oblivion of injuries done us is a virtue whose practice is expressly enjoined by Heaven; that I conceived that they ought not to spare the Sacs and Foxes, but that they should deprive them of life only as rebels and enemies of the State, and not as their private enemies; that their vengeance was criminal; that to descend to such excesses as those into which they had fallen with regard to the five men whose life they had inhumanly prolonged in order to put them to death in more cruel torments was in some sort to justify the barbarity with which they reproached their enemies; that the right of war simply permitted us to take an enemy's life, and not, so to say, to become drunk in his blood and to plunge him into despair, by putting him to death in any way but that of arms, or in any place but that of combat; lastly, that it was their duty to give the Sacs and Foxes an example of that moderation which is the part of a good heart and, which draws admiration and love on the Christian religion and consequently on those who profess it.

I do not know whether my interpreter translated all that I have just said, but the Indian would never admit that he acted on a false principle. I was going to give him some further reason, when the order was given to advance against the enemy's last fort. This post is situated on the bank of a little river, which joins another called Wisconsin, and falls into the Mississippi thirty leagues off.

We found no one there, and as we had no order to go farther, we spent some days in laying the country waste, so as to cut off from the enemy all means of subsistence. This country is fine enough; the soil is fertile, game common and of good flavour, the nights are very cold and the day extremely hot. I will speak to you in my second letter of my return to Montreal, and of what happened down to my departure for France. I wish first to hear from you and learn whether you find it sufficiently detailed. The sequel of my relation will depend on your answer, and I shall omit nothing to prove the tender friendship with which I am, dear brother, your affectionate brother,

EMANUEL CRESPEL, *Recollect.*

PADERBORN, January 10th, 1742.

For all our life is made of little things,
Our chain of life is forged of little rings,
And little words and acts uplift the soul.

MAURICE F. EGAN.