

THE BROTHER'S STORY.

BY PROF. J. C. GWILLIM.

FOR many days we had been paddling up a great lake in the north, searching for a trading post and mission which were known to be situated at its northern limits; and when it first came in sight at the bottom of a deep bay, some six miles from us, it looked like a veritable city to our eyes, so used to the wilderness. For there, on a low barren sand hill, was the post and the mission beside it, each in its own stockade and even a church, whose tinned steeple glinted with a faint suggestion of mosques and minarets across the calm stretch of water.

And it was here I met the hero of my tale. He was a brother of the mission, and such a cheerful little man—old in years but young in heart and manner. Forty long years he had spent in this dreary land, doing what he might in all humbleness for the Indians and traders who might come that way. All the people seemed to love him. Indeed it did one good to hear his voice among the Indians, talking and laughing as one of themselves; for he worked with them or tried to teach them to work, slept with them and lived his life their humble companion and adviser. He had been away with his people when we came up and offered to take his picture. Poor, simple-minded little man, his face beamed with delight, as he put on his worn cassock and girdle, and stood before the long, low mission cottage. The thoughtful priest, his superior, had brought a plant outside to grace the background, but there needed none, for the grace of God had set its seal upon his face. It was now September, with its pleasant evenings free from the plague of flies, and we went together to the little graveyard by the shadow of the wood.

There were, indeed, plenty of graves for so small a people sleeping there beneath the shadow of the cross. Then, as we rested there, I heard the brother's story.

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"Forty years ago I came here. That is a long time in a new land like this. Yet it is nearly all my life. Since then I have never been back, even to the settlements, but at times have journeyed from one remote trading post to another through this great region; nor have I wished to, for I have grown to be as an Indian in all my ways, with more sympathy for them than for my own people. Besides, I serve the church. But before that time I was filled with a love of change and adventure, leaving my home and people in Canada to join the great fur company, which I had served for some months before the time came of which I have to tell you.

It was the custom in those days—as it may be now for all I know—to send up supplies once a year from Isle La Crosse to Fort Chippewayan. This taking of the boats is a matter of great importance in the life of the trading posts. For then those Indians and Half-breeds who can run, and pack goods across the portages, come together to form a brigade. Very proud they are, too, of the position, for are they not bearers of all an Indian desires, the heroes of many dangerous voyages, and prime favorites in the great dances, and the gambling or feasting.

Such a brigade as this set out from Isle La Crosse one June morning as the sun rose over the lake; and I went with them, for we were bound for Fort Chippewayan, which lies at the