

ON LAKE AND PRAIRIE.



BETWEEN Hudson's Bay and the Rocky Mountains there stretches a vast region where the traveller beholds, whichever way he turns, endless plains studded with numerous lakes and traversed by mighty streams. Not a mountain, scarcely a hill to change the monotony of the landscape! A thick stout grass alternating with totally barren spots here and there, a few scanty shrubs, a belt of trees on the watery banks of the rivers, and dense forests to the north, constitute the vegetation of this wide expanse, and lend during the brief summer months a pleasing aspect to the country; but no sooner has winter set in with its icy blasts and thickly falling snow, then lakes, rivers, forests and prairies are transformed into an immense dreary plain covered with a peerless white mantle. This is the domain of the red man. They were once his hunting grounds. On the vast prairies the buffalo roamed in large herds and in the large forests northward the caribou had his haunts. Now both the caribou and the buffalo are scarce. There remain but the fish in the lakes and rivers and the wild goose that in flocks of thousands visits annually this region in its migrations to southern climes. The Indian is left with the alternative either of starving or setting his net for fish. This is a poor occupation for him. He cannot till the soil that lies under his feet, and he often sits dreaming of the past. During this vision of bygone days he hears the shouts of the hunters when they set forth on daring expeditions or returned home in triumph with the rich booty of the chase. Now a forced inactivity keeps him in his wigwan till famine drives him forth to search for a less scanty livelihood. He finds it easier however to rely on the support allowed him by a kind government. Poor, poor child of the prairie! His nature impells him to lead a wild life, a life interspersed with the pleasures of an excited chase followed by prolonged feasting. No cold could deter him from tracking the deer in its recesses, no snow would be too deep. Now he has to bid

adieu to these pleasures and he is weighed down by the loneliness that reigns supreme throughout his domains. He feels that he is ill-treated, abandoned. But no, he is not abandoned; he has a friend. Is it his brother from another tribe who can console him by telling him of privations like his own? Is it a poor abandoned native of the woods that comes to remonstrate with him? No, it is not a child of the forest, it is not a native of the chilling North-West. It is a son of a fair land of warm climes. It is the missionary, the Oblate of Mary Immaculate, who left his home, his parents, his sunny Province, his mild Bretagne or his chivalric Lorraine in his native France, or the green isle of Erin, or the shores of the majestic St. Lawrence to come to the side of the poor red man, to console him, to teach him. The wailings of the forlorn Indian were heard across the wide seas. Angels had taken up the call from the American forests and dropped it on the European shores into the ears of generous hearted youths who abandoned the comfort of their homes and the luxuries of their native land to fly to the bleak North-West to cast their lot with the uncivilized, the rude, and the pagan, to tell them that they are brethren, that they are to live together as the closest of friends, that they are to share hunger and cold and that they will be only too happy if they can make them know the true God and his only Son Jesus, the Redeemer. A disinterested love urged these noble men to sever the ties that bound them to kindred and fatherland and to cast their lot in common with the red man, to dwell where he dwelled, to roam where he roamed in order to make his God their God. The Oblate missionaries whose motto is, "God has sent us to preach to the poor," find us better and no wider field opened to their zeal than the great North-West of Canada. No where else indeed, is the poverty of the natives united with so much barrenness in nature, with so many hardships and fatigues for the missionary.

(To be continued.)