

A TRIP TO THE SHANTIES.



FOR the last three years it has been my lot as a priest to accompany a brother priest on a missionary trip to the shanties, i.e., the lumber camps, of which there is such a great number along the Ottawa River and its many tributaries. Our voyage was up the Black River and the River Coulonge. If you look at a good map of the Dominion of Canada, you shall see that the Ottawa River has its sources towards the north-east, near those of the St. Maurice and the Gatineau. The Gatineau flows south, and at its mouth is no doubt surprised to meet with its old friend the Ottawa, with whom it parted at its very fountain-head. The St. Maurice takes a course which is also, on the whole, a southerly one, and empties into the St. Lawrence, at Three Rivers. But the noble Ottawa, in direct opposition, as it were, to its final destiny, proceeds from its sources in a direction which is, for a great distance, towards the West. Of course, it afterwards bends to the South; and when passing Pembroke and Ottawa its general direction is towards the East till it empties into the St. Lawrence, after taking in on its way the Gatineau and many other tributaries of its own; so, if you were leave the Ottawa flowing east at Pembroke or Ottawa and travel north, you should come again upon the Ottawa flowing west. It is not very far to the south of this northern stream of the Ottawa that the Black and Coulonge Rivers take their rise. Then, draining the country intervening, they flow nearly parallel to each other into the southern part of the Ottawa; the Black River at the foot of Allumette Lake, and the Coulonge, just above Coulonge Village, the present terminus of the P. P. J. Railroad of bonus fame.

Leaving the parish in which I am stationed, the Sunday after Epiphany, I reach that evening the hospitable home of the parish priest of G——, whose *compagnon de voyage* I am to be. We start the following morning. There are three of us—the Rev. *Curé* of G——,

myself, and our driver. The latter is a *habitant*, warmly clad in homespun. He is short and stout, not over prepossessing in looks, but a jolly, good, attentive man. On the back of the collar of his coat is a large *capuchon*, or hood, with which in a daintier form our snowshoe clubs are familiar; it is a very useful article of clothing for anyone that makes a trip to the woods in winter, as it admirably protects the head and face against the cold north or the cutting east wind that drives the snow and frost into the face of the traveller, especially on some of the big lakes over which the road runs. Our driver is himself an old *voyageur*, familiar with all the usages and customs of the shanty. When in a perfect labyrinth of roads, he can unfailingly detect the one that leads to the shanty. He can sing a song, crack a joke, smoke a pipe, or take a *coup*, with the best man in the land. Such is our guiding angel through the wilderness; and a very painstaking and attentive one he is. Of my comrade and myself, I must, of course, say nothing: the reader will take it for granted that "we are both honourable men."

So we jog along for five or six weeks, till our work is at last over; most of the time in good humour; going from one shanty to another; now crossing over from Black River to the Coulonge, and back again; now crossing and re-crossing each of those streams till we scarcely know on which side we are. A shanty is a rough cottage built of logs. The interstices in the walls are stuffed with moss to keep out the cold. The roof is made of *scoops*. Split a log exactly down the middle; *scoop* out the flat side of each piece, leaving a thickness of say two or three inches, so that both pieces will form two longitudinal sections of a hollow cylinder; there you have two scoops. These are placed longwise from the centre of the roof to the eaves, each scoop lapping over on its neighbour like a shingle, and all being laid with the convex side alternately up or down. Or, rather, it is better to say that first a row of scoops is laid with the concave side upward, and