

LETTER FROM REV. D. DUFF.

WILLIAMS CREEK, Cariboo, 1st June, 1865.

MY DEAR MR. BURNS.

This is the date of the proper commencement, as recognised by law, of our mining season. The miners who had gone down the country to winter, have returned, and the scene at "the Creek" is, on the whole, a busy one. From and after this every claim must be fully represented, otherwise a new claimant coming forward may urge his title with some chance of success. It is considered that not one-half the number of men employed here on former seasons have come up this year. This is accounted for chiefly by the unfavourable results of last year, and partly by the high price of provisions caused by the money-making propensities of a few speculating Jews, and also by the high export tax on gold, which amounts to about three per cent. A good mining season is, however, very generally anticipated, as there will be work for all and wages much the same as last year. The snow has well gone from the valley of the Creek, but all the hills around are as white as in mid-winter. To-day a pack train of fifty animals came in, the first of the season, but had not the road been cleared for them, it would have made a commencement of this kind some weeks later.

Since I wrote to you I have been down the country as far as Williams' Lake, or 130 miles below Williams' Creek. My purpose in this tour, as I think I noted in a letter to you, was both to visit other portions of the field of labour and to obtain relief from the long-lying snows of Cariboo. The first day's travelling was over snow from two to three feet deep, the second day on a dry dusty road. The lake (which has no connection with the creek of that name) is within three miles of the Fraser River, and along it runs what is called the "river trail." There is a small settlement at the upper end of the lake, and the remains of an old mission house used by the Romish priests in their efforts to convert the Indians. The natives, whose tribe takes its name from this lake, are nearly extinct, a great part of them having been cut off by an epidemic two years ago. Here also are buildings formerly used as a court-house and jail, and magistrate's residence, all of which were in requisition in '62, when the trail to the mines passed that way, and hundreds were camped around the grassy flats. This is usually regarded as one of the agricultural districts, and like the other arable portions of the Colony of rather limited extent. There are several ranches which produce the usual farm crops of grains and cereals, this, however, being the first season of wheat. The want of rain is greatly felt, and the expensive and tedious process of irrigation has to be resorted to, sometimes requiring the making of a ditch miles in length to bring water for this purpose. No doubt, however, if a crop can be had a good price is sure to be got for any article of consumption at the mines.

In the lake district I met with but one family, as the Ranches are held by young and perhaps single men. At Alexandria, one of the Hudson Bay Co's. Forts, 30 miles to the north of Williams' Lake, and also on the river, there are several respectable families from the mother country. I would have had a baptismal service here were it not for the illness of the young ones to be presented. In most cases, I believe, a form of marriage is recognised, and imposed by the Master of the Fort, who has the functions ex-officio of a magistrate. An application was made to me for the solemnization of this ordinance by a countryman of my own, who had made alliance with a native, and I never before conversed with a "squaw" so well versed in Scripture truth.

From Alexandria I pursued my way upward and backward to Quesnel Mouth which is 35 miles nearer to Williams' Creek. I found this place very dull compared with its appearance last summer when I passed there, and the Chinese element in the population as much increased, if not more, than the other had diminished. Our meetings here were rather favourable in point of numbers and strangely composed with regard to creeds. •