

## Rev. Father Charlebois, O. M. I. Lost in the Forest.

Rev. Father Charlebois, O.M.I., at Duck Lake, Sask., Canada, writes to the Montreal True Witness:

I received some letters from readers of your paper expressing a desire to hear more about the happenings in my missions, so to please them I will tell a few more incidents.

One midnight there was a brisk rapping at my door and excited voices saying: "Quick, quick, Father, she is very sick."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Marie Canada."

"What can I do for her? She is a Protestant, and I have no medicine in the house."

"Hurry, Father, she wants to be a Catholic before she dies."

Upon those words, I rose up like electricity and was ready in five minutes to go to her.

She was lying on a board, her head propped up with two pillows, an old blanket thrown over her. I had met her a few days before, and she was kind and hospitable to me, as I was passing her cabin.

I looked pleased when she saw me at her side.

"Grandmother," said I, (for the old squaws like the title) what can I do for you?"

She put out her hand to me and said "my Grandson, I wish to say Catholic prayers."

"That is well, grandmother, it will help you to enter the home of the Great Spirit; have courage, the Blessed Mother in heaven will aid you."

I began to instruct her but she told me that she had already been baptized by a priest.

"Long ago," said she, "a Black Robe, like you, passed through the woods and he made a Christian of me, but he went away and I never again saw a priest in the deep forest—there were only Protestants there, and I became like one of them."

I heard her confession and prepared her for death. She was truly penitent. She longed to receive Jesus into her heart; when she did so her grateful prayer was "My God, I thank Thee; my grandson, I thank you also. I am very happy."

The admirable providence of a merciful God is visible in this conversion for this poor old squaw, contrary to her habit, left the dense woods to come to visit her sister near my mission. Three days after as she was about to return home, she fell ill. Behold the goodness of God, when He sends us an affliction it is because He is about to give us some precious grace.

A few days after she died happily while I was offering up the holy sacrifice of the Mass and praying for her. Her last request was that her daughter and grandson, who were Protestants, should become Catholics.

Not long after word was brought to me that a Protestant family at Lake Castor, 60 miles away, wished me to baptize them, so I started off in the face of a fierce north wind, extreme cold and heavy snow. Truly a priest needs the help of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to venture out in such frightful weather in search of souls!

Thank God, I arrived safely, traveling from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. I had gone about 50 miles and was half dead from fatigue when I reached the cabin of a half-breed family. They kindly took me in and let me rest over night. Next morning I finished the distance of 10 miles. It turned out that the mother of the family was the daughter of Marie Canada. As I entered their hut they shook my hand but said not a word. In respect for their grief I also was silent for a time; then I spoke to them of the dead grandmother, exhorting them to be resigned to the holy will of God. They shed many tears, and as I sympathized with them I told them how happy she was in heaven.

"We all wish to become Catholics," said the chief of the family, "we loved her one earth, she was kind to us, we wish to meet her in heaven."

Please baptize us. I wish you would also make my father a Catholic. He is not bathed in prayer (not baptized) and he will soon die."

I was very sorry to hear this about his father. "You have a good will," said I, "but I cannot do this right away. I must first instruct you. I will stay with you for a few days, and prepare you and try to convert your father."

This suited them very well. Next morning I said Mass in their miserable cabin. They were on their knees and very attentive. Then I went to see the father. He was civil. I spoke to him of his illness, of the chase, etc. He seemed intelligent and well able to hear and speak, but when I spoke of religion he lost, at once, all power of conversing. He kept saying "I have dull ears, I do not hear you."

His son begged him in a touching manner to listen to me, but it seemed in vain to move his heart. His grandsons said to him: "Grandfather, will you not let yourself be baptized? Oh we would be so happy to have you with us." But these little apostles also met a refusal. Not succeeding for the time being, with this old madman, I still had great consolation with the children. What an ardent desire they had to be instructed. Nearly all the time they were on their knees near me while I taught them their prayers. Their first act in the morning was to assist at Mass. Immediately after, "come quickly," they would say to one another, "let us make the traps to catch the hares so we can give them to the man of prayer (myself). Let us ask the good God to help us." They would return in triumph with twenty or thirty hares. "The Great Spirit has given us plenty for the day, now we will learn more about the religion."

I instructed the family all the time and in three days they had learned the Pater and Ave, the Creed, and the principal truths of religion. They were all extremely happy when I baptized them. I gave them some crucifixes, medals and pictures. I was short one crucifix, and the poor child who did not get one burst out crying. I tried to console him by giving him pictures, and promised to bring him a crucifix when I came again. The family was sad on my leaving them, and so was I, for I was so happy among those simple, innocent souls, sharing in their privations and poverty. Among such as these one feels nearer to God than in the palaces of the rich. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

I returned to my mission, thanking God for the success of my journey.

In visiting the different missions I am obliged to travel through barren forests where no railroad has yet reached. Here is one of my ventures. Our caravan was made up of two trains of dog sleds with two Indian guides, a brother, and myself. As the road was bad we led the way on foot, the dogs following with our baggage on the sleds. The sun melted the snow, and we had to plough through this up to our knees in slush. As night came on the cold thickened the snow and it froze to our clothing and made it difficult for us to drag along. After hours of walking the cords of the snowshoes cut our feet, and our socks were soaked with blood. The numerous falls we had made me think of the falls of our Saviour under the weight of His heavy cross, and encouraged us to brave the perils of the road. We started at 4 a.m., and at 6 p.m. we came in sight of a little chapel at Pakitawakan. Here we stopped to rest and to dry my vestments. We had a board for a bed, but the shelter of the walls was preferable to sleeping outside under the stars. Anxiety for the morrow gave me very little repose, for I met with a great disappointment. I had expected to meet an Indian here who could conduct us to Opapiskotinak. The two guides with me did not know the way beyond Pakitawakan. There was not a man visible at the

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place. On entering the chapel I found a shawl hanging from a beam and attached to it a note written in Cree characters which read: "Father, my wife has left me for the other life (she is dead). My heart is sad. I cannot rest here. I will go afar to live. I leave the fish for the dogs. This shawl belonged to my dead wife. Take it and pray for her soul. Joseph Colomb." This old Indian was the guardian of the mission. Imagine in what straits we now were. We were 60 miles off from the nearest camp, separated by a forest, rivers and lakes, which we had never yet seen. I was grieved at the desertion of the Indians from this little mission of the Assumption, thinking what a loss it would be to their souls' salvation. It would not be wise to turn back and yet where could we strike the right road?

If we went astray we would perish in the wilderness. In the midst of these sad thoughts I fell asleep. At daybreak I was awakened by the bright sunlight shining upon my face. Instantly recollecting that this was St. Joseph's Day (March 19) I called upon the saintly protector of the Holy Family to lead us out of our danger. I offered the Mass with that intention, and felt that St. Joseph and our guardian angels would become our guides. How fervently we pray when we are in distress. We should pray the same at all times for we are always needy.

We let the poor dogs rest until noon, while we baked the little flour we had, and we made some traps to catch hares in case of a famine. At 1 p.m. we put on our snowshoes and I started ahead, the Brother bravely following me, and the dogs and sleds coming after us. Before leaving Lake Pelican I had a map of the road made on paper by an Indian to guide us to Opapiskotinak, and now I was glad of it. As I went ahead I carried the paper in my hand, examining the forms of the lakes and mountains, the number of islands, etc., to try to discover the right trail.

The previous autumn some Indians had gone over this road on a visit to Rev. Father Ronald, but the snow now hid all traces of their pathway. We struck one portage easily, but not the second one, for we wandered two hours without making any headway, going over and over the same road still determined to push on, trusting in God to lead us safely out of the forest.

When darkness came on we halted and said our rosary. A new anxiety worried me. Suppose the Indian had made some mistake on this map or had omitted some indication. Exhaustion brought on a sleep, and we rested on our beds of pine branches till dawn. Then we started off again. I going ahead with my rosary in one hand and the map in the other.

It seemed to me that the Blessed Virgin took one end of my rosary and led me on. We made no mistake this time; we reached our portage safely. Night approaching again we halted and while the Brother and an Indian prepared the beds of pine and the supper, I went with the other Indians to fix traps to catch hares. In the morning we found four hares in the net. This was enough to feed the dogs on for a day. We had some fish for our meal.

According to my map we were still far off from the camp we were seeking. At noon we crossed a great lake and were delighted on beholding in the distance a man with a dog sled. I felt a great weight roll off my heart at this. We went in his direction and soon saw little huts on a hill above the lake. Seeing us, the Indians came out of their huts, one after the other, like sheep issuing from a fold, the likeness being heightened by the long wrappers they were made of barks. They all offered us their hands, but said not a word. They

looked so disconsolate that we knew something sad had occurred. Finally one spoke, "Father," he said, "look here is the child the good God gave me." He pointed to a dying child in his cabin. He could say no more for his voice was choked with sobs. Another Indian, with tears streaming down his face, told me how many he had lost by a raging malady of influenza. "We have all been sick," said he, "but many children have died, and there is one which will soon join them in the other life." The poor Indians' faces showed their sufferings. I consoled and cheered them up.

They prepared a meal of fish for us. We were glad to get it, for we had eaten the last of our own provisions in the morning. Never before had fish tasted so good to me, although we had no salt nor bannocks with it. I stayed with them for some time hearing their confessions, saying Mass, and giving them instructions. They greatly appreciated the visit of their priest, and are strengthened in their faith by receiving his spiritual advice.

I thank all those kind people who have sent me clothing for my poor Indians. I will be glad to get it at any time, summer or winter. As long as it is good enough to wear, some poor man, woman or child will be made happy by getting it. God will surely reward the giver. Ship it to me in a strong box by freight only. Put your name inside and outside and address it as follows: Rev. O. Charlebois, O.M.I., St. Michael's School, Duck Lake, Sask., Canada. Charity clothing, Care C.P.Ry.

A letter can be addressed to me as above. A good lady in Ohio sent me two dollars, and a young boy in Hoopston, Ill., sent me one dollar. I will put this into the school fund to try to clear off that debt of \$20,000 due on it. We must bring up the children in the faith so that they will influence others, and in time become parents able to bring up good Catholic children. For this we need the school to keep them under our care. Limited means prevent me from bringing into it hundreds of little souls who to-day are running like animals through the woods. We cannot support them, so cannot take more than we have at present. An offering, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated and acknowledged. I will write again.

FATHER O. CHARLEBOIS, O.M.I.

## The Human Touch.

Haven't we all felt the need of it? A little girl, tucked up in bed all alone, began to cry. "I'm 'fraid," she said to her mother, who came to her rescue.

"But there's nothing to be afraid of, dear. See, here is dolly. Dolly will stay with you. And then you know, dear, that God is with you, too. So nothing can harm you."

With which comfort the little girl was quieted, and the mother returned to her evening guests.

Soon, however, she heard the sobs beginning afresh in the upstairs bedroom, and, hastening, "Why, what is the matter?" she inquired.

"Oh, mamma, mamma dear, I'm 'fraid! And I don't want dolly, and I don't want Dod! I want somebody wiv a skin face."

Isn't that it? Isn't it why the Word became flesh? Doesn't the demand for the realment to a heartache? And after all comfort is said and we have stayed ourselves on the promises and have girded up the loins of our minds with resolutions, doesn't it still remain that we would give all we have for the touch of a vanished hand—"a touch of her hand on my cheek," as Lowell wrote? Then shall not God in His faithful love satisfy this longing some sweet day? I say to you that He surely will. Yes, it will be again the "skin face," the warm, caressing, human touch. It will be that, and the caress of the vanished hand, which we have lost a while, shall again fall with ministrant love upon our cheeks, and make us forget the empty years. God does not mock us. If it were not so, He would have told us.—Rev. George B. Hatch.

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"We can go to the one of the gentlemen and rest until they please tell Mr. Walltman on important call upon him after As he is compelled to early in the morning him during the course They went away trouble, and the se forgot to mention the sage. Coming to him after one, jaded and as was the draught which he had quaffed self on a chair and to aimless thought, stood directly in front he had a full and new Congressman—the of society and fam form of the serious y boy who fished, swam many years back on reme. It was a del a satisfying feeling thons gave him. T fulness about the he plate full of that bit ambition which had long. He could have this elegant gentleman parted beard and must serious face, was real loved Ruth Pendleton loved.

The mirror which shapely form seemed its light on him. was very dark, and was looking a shadow to grow out of the come nearer to him and studied it as a cu of the brain until a his ears and notified person had really en The first look at the Florian to believe dreaming, for the m gravely there, as if welcomed, was the Scott, the hermit o islands, just as he Paul's play or when him at Linda's grave helmet-fashion, his bl high boots, and the the sharp blue eyes He made no moveme no word, but stood rian until a chill cre Congressman's shoulde "Scott, is this yo holding out his hand like an apparition."

"And so I am," said the proffered hand for "a ghost of the past more out of place than house?"

"You don't look so rian, who felt that t pletely would not be homes of kings, and te his hand and sho it as if he never wou

"This is the hand I said in excuse for his have overthrown me glad, but I can't feel new had happened, y deny."

The hermit went ar the room in his sim the at the picture of moment, for a lon picture of Ruth.

"This should not be "If I know what's city."

"True," said Flo hard to do right al

"Not for you," s and suspicious Flori ness in the tone. "N in the main acts squ Do you think so?"

"Some things are s than others," was t slowly and smilingly this is a cold grea feel the honor you It is something unus do, and I am troubl how it impresses me.

"No anxiety on my Scott, coming to t front of him, with studying the beauty

"I must be off before so you're a Congress

"High up, isn't J rian, blushing like a am pretty close to g close to make much I get them. And you you said to me abou that it would be perhaps. Ah! how er man must live to prophecy."

"I have not eaten Scott, "and perhaps