

FORWARD TO THE FRONT

no ; it was ever up and on. Never before had such a man stood within the fort. Who could conquer that northern stream at such a season ? But the missionary only smiled, and asked for canoe and men. He was given a large craft and three Indian lads.

And once more that dauntless herald of the Cross sped northward. For several days the trim canoe cut the water, driven by determined arms. Then winter swept down in all its fury ; the river became full of floating ice, jamming, tearing, and impeding their canoe. Axes were brought to bear ; they would cleave a passage. The missionary must not be stopped. How they did work ! The ice-chips flew ; the spray dashed and drenched them, and then encased their bodies with an icy armour. Colder and colder it grew, and the river became a solid mass from bank to bank. The canoe was dragged ashore, and placed *en cache* on the bank with their baggage. All around was the pitiless wild. It was a dreary sight to this intrepid traveller, with winter upon him, the bleak wilderness surrounding him, and very little food. The enthusiasm of a less ardent spirit would have been completely damped ; but Mr. Bompas was made of sterner stuff, and without delay he and his companions pushed forward through the forest. On and on they travelled by a circuitous route, through brushwood and thickets, with clothes torn, hands and faces scratched and bleeding, and uncertain where they were. Night shut down and wrapped them in its gloomy mantle. All the next day they struggled forward, without food, and again night overtook them. Still they staggered on, and just when they were wearied to the point of exhaustion the lights of Fort Resolution, on Great Slave Lake, gleamed their welcome through the darkness.

It was necessary for the traveller to remain here until the ice in the lake became firm enough to cross with dogs and snow-shoes. Mr. Lockhart, the Company's officer, offered his