

A CONTEMPLATED TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION

Among the Indians of the Micmac Tribe 1610---1910

The 24th of June 1910 will recall the most memorable event in the history of the Micmacs, as three hundred years ago the first members of their tribe received baptism at Port Royal, now Annapolis Royal, N. S. At their head was Grand Chief Memberton—in Micmac 'Maopelto' or General Leader. This Sacrament was administered by the Rev. Jessé Fléché, a French priest of the diocese of Langres. 21 Indians were baptised on the 24th of June, 1610, but during the same year the number of converts reached 140, and before long the whole Tribe was Christian. And, to use the words of the Dean of the Canadian Hierarchy, Bishop Cameron, 'their loyalty to the Catholic Church has ever continued to be simply heroic.'

It is known that the Micmacs belong to the large Algonquin family, which occupied half of North America, East of the Mississippi (Mesgig Sipo, Grand River), which numbered more than 90,000 Indians. But this interesting Tribe was small, about 4,000 souls, which is their population to the present day. All other tribes are decaying and gradually dying away. The Micmac tribe only is as flourishing as ever. They are scattered in more than 50 reserves all over Eastern Canada, to wit., in the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and even in Newfoundland.

But the chief settlement is that of Restigouche, in the Province of Quebec which comprises 120 families—about 510 souls. As the Indians own no land in Annapolis now, where the momentous event of their first Baptism occurred, it was thought that Restigouche would be the most fitting place to commemorate it by the erection of a suitable monument.

Moreover, at Restigouche are stationed now the Capuchin Fathers, who

were sent to Port Royal by Richelieu in 1632, to evangelize the Indians, to minister to the white settlers and chiefly to open at the King's expense, the first College or Seminary (as it was called) of New France. They were to receive free of charge 30 white children and as many Indians as would present themselves. It was so prosperous that in 1643 we find 12 Fathers stationed at Port Royal for the work of the College and missions among the Indians. Unfortunately wars brought that great undertaking to an end in 1654. But the Micmacs have always kept a vivid and quite picturesque souvenir of both this mission and the previous one given by the Secular Priests and the Jesuit Fathers. This latter they graphically called the 'Teaching of the Black Robes,' and the other the 'Teaching of the Barefooted.' This expression (peculiar to the Micmacs) was an enigma for those of our day, until the Capuchin Fathers came back among them in 1894.

Another attractive feature of Restigouche is the Sanctuary of our 'Grand Mother' Saint Ann, where she has been honored and visited by pious pilgrims for nearly 200 years; those Indians who call her poetically 'the Queen of all the Micmacs,' will be glad to see in the monument to be erected there a new glorification of the Grand Mother of Christ 'Sesos ogomitjel,' and a new pledge of her powerful protection.

The detailed programme of the solemn celebration to be held on June 24th 1910, will be published in due time. But a list of subscriptions for the monument is now opened. And the magnificence thereof will depend on the generosity of our friends. Contributions may be sent to 'the Director of the Pilgrimage, Restigouche, P. Q.,' or to 'the Micmac Messenger,' where all amounts received will be thankfully acknowledged.