



CHRIST CHURCH, CHIPPEWYAN, ATHABASCA.

three weeks' stay at one unfinished house at the Landing was relieved of any monotony by our being called on by the Mounted Police, with every available inhabitant, to fight the fire that came rolling in fiery masses down the hillside and threatened the houses and stores.

I may say here that the whole journey through the diocese has hardly ever been out of sight and smell of fire. This vast area of country, drained by the Athabasca and Peace rivers, must, during this summer, have been sadly devastated. The destruction of valuable timber must be incalculable. At one point on the Athabasca, in a strong wind, the burning embers were carried across the river, quite 500 yards in breadth, if not more, and started the fire among the dense growth of pine and poplar on the opposite bank. At Vermilion, on the Peace river, for two or three weeks during hot, cloudless weather the sun was obscured by smoke. One afternoon in July, about 4 p.m., the sky, though apparently cloudless, became a dark, lurid red. The birds began to roost, and the same hush seemed to creep over nature as in a total eclipse. The air was thick with the burnt spines of pine that powdered at the slightest touch. The Indians said, in awed tones, "Ochetaw"—it is the fated day. The French half-breeds betook themselves to their prayers and their beads. So thickly was the river strewn with the light, almost impalpably burnt spines that a water-mark some two inches in breadth and from one-half to one inch in height was left at the level the river was at when they fell.

And yet there was no fire of so serious a character in the neighborhood of Vermilion itself to account for such a state of atmosphere. Should fires continue to the same extent as they are doing now, the vast tract of country, much of it only valuable for its timber, lying between

the Saskatchewan to the south and Hay river to the north, and reaching from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the country north of Prince Albert, must soon become a treeless waste. I cannot but think that such a condition will be injurious to the whole of the Northwest, including Manitoba.

While waiting for the steamer *Athabasca* to take us down the river, the Rev. Chas. Weaver arrived from Lesser Slave Lake. This enabled me to enter into details, and make arrangements for the erection of the mission building at Wapuskaw. To economize labor and fuel, I drew up a plan to combine the missionary's residence and school under one roof, with which, after a few modifications, Mr. Weaver seemed well satisfied. I regret to say the lowness of water this summer, and so the increased difficulty of getting in supplies, tools, stores, etc., will heavily increase the expense at this mission, and will be a serious call on our resources.

Mr. Weaver was married by the Rev. J. R. Lucas to Miss Harriet Thompson, of London, Ont., July 18, at the Grand Rapids. Her work and influence at Chipewyan give every assurance that she will make a good missionary's wife.

There may be too frequent cause to regard non-celibacy as a weakness in our clerical system, more especially in the apostolic, i.e., missionary order. But, let the wife be imbued with a true missionary spirit, and she is a tower of strength, and just that link between her husband and the Indian women that nothing else could supply. Accompanied by Mr. A. S. White, Mr. Weaver left the Landing about a week before our departure.

The Indian hall, the first room entered in the mission house here, does duty for the present for a church on Sunday. The services have been well attended. The members of the Mounted Police stationed here during the open season have been very regular in their attendance while here. To my dismay, on unpacking the printing press I brought from Winnipeg, I found the goose-neck broken. It would have caused considerable delay and expense in getting this repaired but for the kind offices of the engineer of the oil-boring party, who was able to repair it for me, so that it only awaits a little leisure to commence printing some manuals, small portable books in the Cree syllabics, provided I have not forgotten the lessons learnt at Winnipeg last winter.

The day before we started Mr. Whitaker and Dr. Reazin arrived, *en route* to the Mackenzie, and became our fellow-passengers. The former is, I believe, now on Herschell Island, off the mouth of the Mackenzie river.

Miss Hatley, sister of Mrs. Lucas, also accompanied us. After her arrival at Chipewyan she consented to accept the position of school mistress vacated by Miss Weaver on her marriage