

The Bishop's Visit to Negwenang, Lake Nepigon.



Chief Chey-a-Dah.

On Sunday, the 5th of September, the Bishop of Algoma, his chaplain, Rev. Robert Renison, and his son, Mr. Walter Thorneloe, assembled in the little village of Nepigon, a station on the C.P.R. towards the western end of Lake Superior, for the purpose of

making the trip up the Nepigon River and visiting the Indian Mission of Negwenang on Nepigon Lake.

The weather was delightful, balmy and sunny, with just that touch of frostiness which belongs to the early days of autumn. We had a quiet but interesting day of services in the little wooden church which stands in the midst of the trees beyond the station. A restful spot it is, where the heart rises readily to the God of Nature. In front of the church are three graves which speak with silent eloquence of the dark passage to the skies. One of these graves has a special interest for us. It is the grave of Mrs. Renison, who died (may we not say the death of a martyr) after years of devoted service among the Nepigon Indians.

Monday morning, the 6th of September, finds us bright and early wending our way to the river's edge below the railway bridge. We are heavily laden. All around us when we reach the water are bundles, packages, bags and utensils of various kinds. It is evident we expect to be away from the centre of supplies for some time. Salt pork, potatoes, a bag of flour, oatmeal, tea, sugar, salt, etc., etc., are conspicuous, and give promise of support by the way. A tent, some blankets, frying pans and kettles are also much in evidence, and assure us of comfort, if not luxury. By the kind forethought of a great friend of Algoma in England, the Bishop is specially provided with an

air bed. This he afterwards found to be luxury indeed.

There they all were this somewhat motley array of things together with several bundles of clothing to be given to the Indians. And in charge of these, and of us, were our seven Indian guides and canoeemen—more than necessary, and anxious, all of them, to do honour to the Bishop and to the occasion. There was Michael otherwise known as Wutgedonquaost, which means, "A bird sitting or floating on the clouds"; Petigogwan, (who had his wife with him), which means, "The sound of a partridge drumming"; Obiseekung—"A man in a trance"; Cheadaw—"Any kind of noise"; Oodskay—"A fluttering insect"; Chicksaw and Dane-dish, which both mean, "My son." And a nicer, more considerate and kindly lot of men it would be hard to find. They can hardly be said to speak English, though one or two of them could understand it a little and make themselves to some extent understood. Our intercourse, therefore, was almost wholly through the chaplain, Mr. Renison, who speaks Indian with remarkable fluency.

It was a pretty sight, the four birch bark canoes, graceful and light, sitting on the water like birds, and despite their heavily laden condition, skimming over its surface with a speed very surprising. Certainly Indians know how to paddle.

Our course lies, first of all, across a wide expanse of the river known as Lake Helen. But after four or five miles we pass out of the pretty lake scenery into the river proper, at this point a slow stream of about 100 yards in width. Here and there we pass a rude hut occupied by Indians of Roman Catholic allegiance. Presently we come to our first wigwam. There it is, a veritable wigwam, made of birch bark laid spirally round a cone-shaped stack of poles. At the top is the smoke hole, on one side the entrance. In front of this stood an Indian woman and three little children—pagans, our guides told us. We could spare time for only a few words. They were on their way back to their quarters up the lake. Ah, how sad to think we could do so little for them.

Presently the river narrows. Its stream becomes swifter. High rocks shut it in. Its waters swirl and eddy at their foot. Here was a place where

only a week or two since a Baptist minister, unwise enough to attempt the passage without a guide, lost his life. The cliffs now frown upon us from a height of several hundred feet. The outlook is wild and picturesque in the extreme. And presently an impassable rapid lies before us, its wild rush of water pouring tumultuously between high, gate-like rocks forming a lovely picture. It is our first portage, and we have to get out and carry everything for more than two miles overland to the smooth waters above. What a business it is! And what wonderful carrying power those Indians have. With broad leather straps passed over their foreheads, and around the bundles on their back and on their shoulders, they carry with comparative ease 200 pounds. But it takes time. And the end of the day only found us at the farther side of this "long portage," 15 or 20 miles from our starting point. Our tent was soon erected, a roaring fire of logs made provisions produced and cooked by the Indians, and presently what a meal we had! Hunger is indeed a good sauce! And the Nepigon for an appetite!

Round the camp fire we talk pleasantly of many things—life and its cares, the world's wonders and perils, God and His goodness. The Indians are very appreciative listeners. And in Mr. Renison we had a capital interpreter. Then we go to rest, the strange sounds of the unknown tongue, murmured far into the night by these Indian brethren, lulling us to sleep.

In the night a drenching rain fell; and in the morning with some difficulty we prepared a damp breakfast and ate it in the drizzle. The start was made in what promised to be a steady down-pour. Wetter and wetter it became, till at noon we were in a rather dripping condition as we landed for dinner. But then the weather cleared and at night we were quite dry again. As the shades of evening fell, having passed through wonderful scenery of lake and river and forest, we reached our fourth portage and encamped at a point only five miles distant from the quiet Nepigon Lake, which is said to be ninety miles across.

The next day, refreshed by a splendid night's rest, we were up early and off, soon reaching the Nepigon shore. Here, looking over the great stretch of water, dotted with islands and shimmering in the warm sunshine, we were