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Vol. VII., No. 4.

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April, 1898.

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April 15th, 1898.

THE Kamloops Industrial School has now a brass band in full operation. It has been started only a few months, and is already able to show itself with great advantage. On Easter Sunday a performance was given at the Indian reserve, which made the Indians wonder very much at how much music their children could learn in such a short time. On the following day the band played at the stand in front of the Court House in the city, and was very much appreciated by the population of Kamloops.

The weather has been rather cold during the month of March, and the spring has been put back a few weeks. It has changed to a fine spring weather from the beginning of April, and everything is looking for the best at this writing.

The Holy week has been spent as usual at Kamloops, the Indians following regularly the exercises every day. There were 250 confessions and nearly 200 communions.

The Very Reverend Father Soullier, General of the Order of the O.M.I., died on the 3rd of October, 1897, and the Chapter General of the Order is to be assembled on May 16th next to elect a new Superior General. On that account a Provincial Chapter was held at New Westminster on March 31st for the purpose of electing a delegate for the Chapter General, and Rev. Father Fayard, of New Westminster, has been appointed delegate. He left for Europe with Rt. Rev. Bishop Durien on the 13th of the present month.

Missionary Work Among the Indians.

One must not imagine, as it has been done many times, that missionary work among the Indians in this country is a very agreeable one. Indeed it is consoling to visit some of the camps where the Indians are truly fervent; it is also very interesting to assist at some of the greater meetings where all the Indians rival with each other in regularity. But even there one must not forget that "everything that shines is not gold," and often the poorest in grace will try to appear equal to the most fervent on those occasions. It is not always that the missionary meets with Indians as well disposed. There are camps where there is very little fervor among the Indians; there are others where "tares have been sown among the grain." It even happens that a tribe that had at one time given good encouragement to the missionary has fallen into demoralization to such an extent as to make one doubt whether the bad is not going to exceed the good, and if faith is not liable to become extinct among these Indians after a certain number of years.

There are also places where the Indians show hardly any interest in the missionaries or in religion—where they will possibly show him good regard, address him in a flattering and encouraging way, but will revile him when he is gone and do all they can to keep the Indians in a spirit of indifference, and even hostile if possible.

There are camps where nearly all the Indians have been baptised by the first missionaries in the country, and never fail to have their children christened at

the first occasion, yet who have a very small amount of Christianity, consisting at the most of assisting at a short prayer on Sundays, and per chance of saying mechanically two or three Hail Marys in the morning and as many at night before retiring, but who have not the smallest care for learning their catechism or listening to what the priest might have to say for their instruction. What makes it the more discouraging, they are in most cases victims of drunkenness, immorality and all other vices. And yet, the same Indians, under favorable circumstances, show themselves very docile and prove that they could be made good Christians if only they knew their religion and were protected from temptations to which, as a rule, they know not how to resist. We find the proof of this in the prisons or penitentiaries, where the very ones who appeared the most ferocious and dangerous while enjoying their freedom, become very docile and good natured, and would remain so as long as they are away from temptation. As soon as they are out of prison they return to their former reckless habits, while others become more regular.

It must not be overlooked that there are still in the country thousands of Indians still unchristianized, and who have not the good fortune of receiving the missionaries' visits. The greater part of them are engaged in occupations and continual displacings which renders nearly impossible their presence at the priest's visits. In the early times after the arrival of the first missionaries in the country, the natives, having no other property than their hunting or fishing outfits, did not find much difficulty in answering the missionary's call at their regular visits,

because they could repair to the appointed place with all their earthly possessions, which did not amount to a very heavy luggage; it did not cost them more to live in one place than in another. But since they have taken much interest in cultivating the ground and in stock-raising it has become more difficult for them, and even in many cases impossible, to answer the missionary's call as in former times.

We must also take into account the circumstances under which the missionary toils. The same priest having to attend to a district of several hundred miles of circuit, containing from 2,000 to 4,000 Indians, distributed in bands of from 50 to 150 or 200, he cannot make very frequent visits to each place—three or four times a year at the most. Were he to try and see them more often he could not, because most of the time the Indians would not be at home, but scattered over their fishing or hunting grounds, or engaged in other work which would keep them away from their camps.

Since the missionary can see the Indians only three or four times a year, he must endeavor to give them during the time of his visit as much religious instruction as possible, and this, of course, makes the time of the visit rather laborious for the missionary. In those camps where the Indians are fervent Christians, or where the chief has some influence over his people, the work of the missionary is rendered more agreeable by the encouragements he receives, the Indians having made a sacrifice of their interests in order to come and profit by his visit. There are also other camps where it is necessary to resort to hard pulling, as some Indians have no scruples for being absent from religious exercises.

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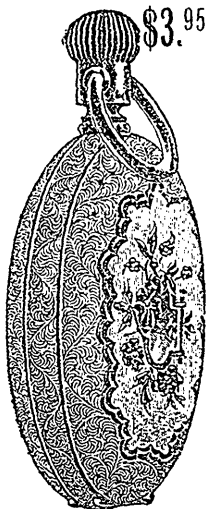
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