

Robert C. Johnson
to Prof. Chester Martin

1918

GLIMPSSES OF THE PAST

IN THE

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT,

1805-36.

FROM

THE LETTERS OF MR. JOHN PRITCHARD.

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MIDDLE CHURCH, MAN. :
RUPERT'S LAND INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL PRESS.
1892.



GLIMPSES OF THE PAST.

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The Red River Settlement.

FROM LETTERS OF MR. JOHN PRITCHARD.

1805-1836.

NOTES BY REV. DR. BRYCE.

Middle Church, Man.
Rupert's Land Indian Industrial School Press.
1892.

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NOTES BY REV. DR. BRYCE.

The following sketch seems to have been written from Nepigon on Lake Superior during the winter of 1805. The writer refers to his having sent a letter on his way back from the western prairies, to his friends in Great Britain, while at the Grand Portage, which was the name given to the waterway between Lake Superior and Rainy Lake.

During 1805 Mr. Pritchard had been stationed at a fort at the junction of the Souris river with the Assiniboine. At this point there were three forts: Brandon House built by the Hudsons Bay Company in 1794; Assiniboine House belonging to the North West Company and surveyed by David Thompson, Company surveyor in 1798. A third fort was at this point called the post at Riviere la Souris. This belonged to the new North West Company, commonly called the X. Y. Company, which had split off from the Northwest Company of Montreal in 1796 and continued until the coalition of 1804. Evidently it took a longer time than the year 1805 to amalgamate the two concerns. It was in this year that John Pritchard was at the X. Y. fort at the mouth of the Souris.

He and his companion started for La Bosse or called by Harmon, "Montagne a la basse." This fort was fifty miles west of the mouth of the Souris, at a point north of Oak Lake. It gets its name from a hill (French *la boose*), evidently one of the sand hills overlooking the Assiniboine between the C. P. R. Stations of Virden and Oak Lake. On Hind's map of 1857, it is plainly marked "Boss Hill."

See also foot-notes.

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GLIMPSSES OF THE PAST.

IN THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT. 1805-1825.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Copy of a letter from Mr. John Pritchard to his Brother, together with several extracts taken from Letters from the same—Dated from Red River in America, detailing some most eventful circumstances of his life—besides some most interesting and pleasing facts relating to this new settlement.

FIRST LETTER.

Neppigone,
(Nepigon)
Dec. 20th. 1805.

My dear Brother:—

I shall now endeavour to give you an account of my wanderings and consequent sufferings last summer. Had it not been for the request I made you in my enclosed letter from the Grand Portage, I should have ever suppressed it and I trust my dear parents will never hear of it.

On the 10th. of June one of our clerks having had one of his horses stolen, came and applied to me to assist him with two others. That not being in my power we agreed to go to the Mountain la Bosse (an establishment distant about fifty miles) and from there he was to take a guide to the River Qu'Appelle. On our arrival at the Mountain la Bosse we could by no means procure a guide and very foolishly risked the journey ourselves, it being a distance of about seventy miles across the plains. On the second night we plainly perceived our folly and consequently determined that if we could not find the River Qu'Appelle the next morning to return, and about 12 o'clock next day changed our route accordingly. My friend went to fetch the horses and I began to gather

wood in order to light a fire. I, perceiving my friend's horse unfettered, called to him not to endeavour to go near to him, or they would both run and we should lose them. I then made a fire to entice them as they were much tormented by the mosquitoes and in that case will immediately gallop to a smoke. My friend paid no attention to my advertisement but kept running after the horses till I lost sight of them. It was in vain for me, who was still extremely lame from my misfortune the preceding winter, to attempt following after him, therefore I thought it most advisable to make fires upon all the banks near me, which might be a guide to him, should he not be able to find his way to me. Twelve o'clock came, but not my friend, I now began to be almost desolate and perceiving a hill at a considerable distance off which appeared to me to be in the plains, I determined to go there and make a fire. After having passed a thick wood, to my inexpressible grief I found the hill to be in the midst of another adjoining wood. When arrived at the hill from the top of which I had hopes of seeing the plains again to my mortification I found myself surrounded by thick and almost inexpressible woods. I then determined to return to the encampment. I had not advanced far before the sky began to darken and a heavy storm of thunder and rain came on. It was now impossible to find my way back having lost my guide, the sun. Towards night I found a small river with a considerable current in it. I determined to sleep there and the next day to follow its course, well knowing it must discharge itself with the great Red River. Next morning at break of day I began to prepare for my departure, but how dreadfully afflicting my situation, without even

1 From this point J. Pritchard and his companion started for a fort on the Qu'Appelle river which was some distance west of the Fort Ellice of to day. They missed their road by going westward while they should have gone a little west of north.

Plainly the wandering man was lost up near the source of the Pipestone river, which he followed down nearly to Oak Lake. He then struck over to the Souris river which he mistook for the Assiniboine. The Assiniboine is spoken of by him as the Red River, just as Harmon writing in June 19th 1805 (page 141,) speaks of the Assiniboine as the "Upper Red River.

blanket, gun or knife, my shoes already worn out and nothing but my clothes to renew them with. It was then the fourth day, and I had eaten nothing except an egg and one frog the day before. The country was unknown to me and even had I known my way to my Fort, the distance was so great I could have no hope, lame as I then was of being able to reach it. I gave my soul to Almighty God and prayed that His and not my will might be done. Seeing death inevitable I became calm and resigned to my fate. Towards evening I discovered the plains and as I thought the great Red River which pleased me much as I should then die with the hope of my body being found by the canoes in the fall, but what was still more pleasant to me I found a kite's nest with two young ones. They were still unfledged and about the size of a full-grown pigeon. I made a fire and singed the down off one which I hastily devoured, the other I subsisted upon two days. What appeared to me to be the Red River was nothing more than a point of the woods on the River where I was. I walked or rather crept along this river for about ten days more living chiefly upon frogs except three young magpies. I now perceived my body completely wasted. Nothing was left of me but my bones covered with a skin thinner than paper, I was perfectly naked my clothes having been worn in shoes. I now perceived at a considerable distance to the right of me a river which appeared large and being almost certain it was the Red River, purposed the next morning to make an effort to get to it, accordingly I set out, having advanced a considerable distance across the plains I became so thirsty I could not proceed. I then prayed to Almighty God, that He in His great goodness suffer me to die of hunger and not of thirst, but if so it was his pleasure not mine, but His will be done. Our heavenly Father was pleased to hear my prayer and I found a small spring very near me and was determined there to die, being fearful if I left the spring I would find no other water.

Oh, my dear brother, how shall I describe to you my feelings at this moment, what crimes, said I, have I committed to deserve so dreadful a death. My body I have seen wasted away by degrees, I have not a friend to

close my eye or blanket to cover my body and far from a holy sepulchre receiving this my earthly frame, that wolf and yonder bird of prey wait only my parting breath to devour my poor remains, surely the murderer's torments are far lighter than mine. Mercy is shown to him even in the manner of his death, his pains are short, he has the company of some good and charitable clergyman pouring the balm of religious comfort into his bleeding soul and his body he is sure that neither the birds of the air or the beasts of the field will devour. I will not distress you or myself, my dear brother, on that head, your own heart will tell you what then were the sentiments of mine. After having agitated my mind for sometime with the above thoughts, God was pleased in his great goodness to shew me, how wise and just, though unforeseen, his judgements are. What a state to my soul when I reflected, and with truth was obliged to acknowledge, that my sufferings however great they were I deserved: and was justly punished. The afflicting hand of God was upon me.

After having recommended myself to God, I determined to proceed, entirely trusting in his divine Providence and Will. I was determined to keep myself as cheerful as possible, and to exert, till death put an end to my sufferings, my every effort to support life. On the next day I arrived at the river, and found it to be much smaller than the Red River. ² I forded it, and advanced into the plains to a small lake, where I slept. Some days before, I had found a nest of small eggs about the size of sparrows', and I had eaten nothing else. How mortifying to me to see the buffaloes quenching their thirst, in every lake near to which I slept, and geese and swans in abundance whilst I was dying of hunger in this land of plenty, for want of wherewith to kill.

After having wandered about for some days, I perceived some woods at a distance which I again supposed were upon the banks of the Red River, but was again disap-

² J. Pritchard crossed the Souris which he calls a river, "Much smaller than the Red River," and journeyed south eastward to ward Turtle Mountain thinking all the time he was far up the Assiniboine where the Shell River empties into it.

pointed, and found it to be a mountain or chain of banks. I proceeded along the same till I found some water in a small brook, and, supposing there might be small fish, devoted a part of the next day to make a fishing line with my hair, and the wire of my hat buckle I worked with my teeth into the form of a hook, but had no opportunity of making use of it, as I found no fish. I here passed two days without eating, and on the second evening, began to arrange my bed in the best manner I could, in order to breathe my last. Pain, disappointment, and hunger had now given way to despair. I was now so weak I could not get up the bank of the river, in order to put a mark, but upon my hands and knees.

I had not lain down many minutes, before my mind, or rather my soul, suggested to me my want of confidence in God's power and goodness, and the heinousness of my offence in thus abandoning myself to despair. I immediately rose and prayed my Heavenly Father to forgive, strengthen, and support me. An old wolf trap being near to me, I took two sticks from it in order to help me up the bank. I was no sooner on its edge when a hen grouse³ flew directly in my face, as I suppose to protect its young. I threw my stick at it and she fell dead at my feet. It was not I that killed it, it was the Almighty, for I had not then sufficient strength. In an ecstasy of joy and gratitude, I threw myself upon the ground, and poured out thanks to the Giver of all goodness. O Lord, did I say, is it possible Thou wilt save me, or is it to prolong my misery? No, no. Thou art too merciful to delight in my sufferings. I ate part of the bird that night, and the next day the rest, and then continued my route, not leaving the little river, as I dreaded the want of water elsewhere. A serene and pleasant calm had now taken possession of my mind and never after forsook me. I this day found a plant, whose root the Canadians call the turnip of the plains: ⁴ But not having a knife or axe

3 He killed a hen grouse i. e., one of our common prairie chicken (*Pedicoetes phasianellus*).

4 After this he took to eating what the Canadians (French *roya-geurs*) call the turnip of the plains. This is the root of one of the Pea family (*Psoralea esculenta*), "Pomme blanche." or "Pomme de Prairie" or "Prairie turnip."

to make a stick, I had no hope of digging them up; the root being at least a foot in the earth, and the ground extremely hard. The root is from 2 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ in girth, by no means unpleasant to the palate. I thought upon the sticks I had taken from the wolf-trap one of which I still retained. It having been pointed for its former use was in every respect fitted for my purpose. I therefore set to work, which was very great labour for me in my weak state. Having eaten a few raw, I returned to my encampment with about half a dozen, roasted them for supper, and found myself greatly refreshed next morning. I continually wandered about this river, living upon those roots and with now and then a frog, in the hope of seeing some hunter or other. Every night I changed my encampment, each of which I supposed my last. On the 30th day, according to a stick upon which my teeth marked each miserable night, I perceived an elevated part of the plains, and immediately proceeded to it as from thence I could discover and be discovered at a greater distance. I found it to be an island in the middle of a large lake. 5 Being, as before mentioned, perfectly naked I did not venture to sleep there, being fearful its night-air would chill me to death; therefore I turned about and gained a point of the woods near, and slept or rather laid down under a fallen tree.

I next day set off, in order to regain the little river, but on my way, behold and admire the Providence of the Almighty! I fancied, and was certain, I saw Indians at a distance, on a different line to the route I was taking. I arrived at the place, and found it, to my great disappointment, to be nothing more than a few bushes. I then went to gather grass to make a fire, being too weak to break the sticks for that purpose.

I had not proceeded half an acre, before I perceived two old wintering houses. You cannot conceive with what ecstasy I beheld the remains of human dwelling. I supposed these houses to have been those of my friend Allen McDonald and the North West Company, at the lakes of the river Qu'Appelle. On entering the deserted houses

5 The wanderer then seems to have reached White Water Lake near Turtle Mountain, where during the preceding year H B Co & N W Co. had passed a season.

I could not help moralizing on the instability of human nature, 'and the insufficiency of man.' "Here," said I, "once good cheer did abound and these now deserted walls have often echoed the cheerful song of the merry Canadian. Oftentimes here, have the light heels of my friends danced to the sound of the animating fiddle, here, perhaps, on this very spot, has my friend Allen spent many a jocund hour. How changed the scene! You, hospitable and ready-opened door, (the door having fallen), you now will receive a poor afflicted guest, whose only wish is to leave his already sapless bones in your quiet recess.

After having thus moralized for some time, I threw myself upon the ground, to give the Almighty thanks for having at last brought me to a place where, in all probability, my body would be found and preserved from ravenous animals. I now went to set a mark upon a small bank near the houses, and to dig up a few roots to appease my hunger. On my return, I made a fire and afterwards arranged a bed as far as my strength would admit, in the form of a coffin. Being so reduced I could have no hope of going any further, the soles of my feet, particularly that of my lame leg being worn to the bones I now sat upon the bed, and, taking a piece of birch bark, began to mark with a nail the melancholy history of my sufferings. I had fixed upon the chimney being the bearer of my epitaph, the straw left by the winterers being my only shroud.

Whilst employed upon this melancholy occasion, I cast my eyes upon the ground, and, without any meaning having taken up a piece of cord, found it to be tarred, and it struck me it must have belonged to the Hudson's Bay people. I then took notice of a sleigh that from its make, I knew must have belonged to them. I now began to think I was mistaken in the place where I was, and that perhaps these were the Shell River houses: "But said I, there ought to be three, namely the Hudson Bay Company's, North West Company's, and our own." "Good God," I again exclaimed, "perhaps 'tis the Turtle Mountain, and that, its lake, but I can soon satisfy myself." 6 The

6 His surmise of his position was correct. He was now fifty or sixty miles from his own fort at the mouth of the Souris.

Hudson Bay and North West Company passed part of last spring there, and if this is the place, I shall find wood cut in the spring, which must still be green. The houses I know are three years old. I directly looked about, and, to my inexpressible joy found a scaffold, for the purpose of putting meat upon, of green wood and many other marks of recent habitation.

Being now fully assured I was at the Turtle Mountain, an outpost from the establishment of my own neighbors distant from my own fort about sixty miles, I began with renovated hope, to look into all the holes and corners for rags of any description, to tie upon my feet, which were now in almost a putrid state.

I had the good fortune to find a pair of old shoes the under leather of which was worn away and several pair of socks. I wrapped the whole about my feet, spent the night in prayer, and next morning at break of day, after invoking the Almighty to strengthen, guide, and support me, I took the road across the plain as near as I could judge homewards. That night I had the good fortune to find, and encamp upon, a small river where I had been to hunt buffaloes a few days before I left my fort, and from whence there is a beaten path to my house, which I was greatly in need of, on account of my feet.

Toward the evening of the following day I discovered a band of Indians crossing the plains before me, but I was too weak to call out or increase my pace to overtake them. ⁷ I raised my stick upon which I put a shoe and had the happiness to find they observed my signal. I was quite overpowered and stood immoveable. Two little boys came running up to me, but my appearance was so dreadful they were afraid to approach for some time. I encouraged them by signals to come to me, which they did: I gave them my hand but was so overcome at once more beholding a human being, that I fell senseless to the ground. When I came to myself, I found the little boys carrying me to their father: who seeing something amiss, was coming forward to me with his horse.

7 That he overtook Indians is not surprising as the great Indian trail from the Missouri, to the Assiniboine passed west of Turtle Mountain, and ran northward.

That All Gracious Being who had hitherto supported me, having now delivered me safe into the hands of my friends left me to nature and them. I was now helpless as a new-born infant, and too weak to ride on horseback, therefore the Indian carried me in his arms to his companions to whom I was well known. On my arrival they came crying around me, one pulling off his shoes, another his stockings, and another covering me with his blanket; whilst my first friend was preparing a little pemmicau of pounded buffalo meat and fat. Having eaten a little, for I was too far gone to have an appetite, and drank a cup of water; they prepared a kind of sleigh upon which I lay down, and was so drawn to their encampment, where we found about forty other tents of Indians.

Whilst our tents were putting up, the men, women, and children formed a large circle round me. They were extremely silent and afraid to come near me. It is impossible to describe to you what I was. I had not the appearance of an inhabitant of this world. Picture to yourself a man whose bones are scraped, not an atom of flesh remaining, then cover those bones with a loose skin, fine as the bladder of an animal, a beard of forty days growth his hair full of filth and scabs. You will then have some idea of what I was. The next day the Indians took me to my fort, in the same way as I was drawn to their tents. On seeing my fort I again became senseless. ⁸ They carried me into my room, and you may suppose my people flocked about me, scarcely believing their senses. With tears in their eyes they kept a mournful silence round me. One of my men, an old man that greatly loved me did not even know me. "What poor old man", said he, "have they brought here? is he dead or alive?" and many such like expressions were uttered.

Having recovered sufficient strength of mind, I gave to each my hand, and assured them nothing was amiss with me; that my intellects were as sound as ever, and that I was weak for want of nutriment. And now an universal joy played upon each countenance; one and all at the same time, putting questions to me. The news was soon

⁸ After forty days the wanderer reached his own fort at the mouth of the Souris.

at my neighbours. They and their men came running breathless to see me, my friend McKay of the Hudson's Bay Company brought with him flour, sugar, coffee and tea with a couple of grouse and immediately set a cooking himself as I believe the people were so transported that no one would have thought of providing for me.

Having taken a little refreshment, they washed, shaved and clothed me. McKay dressed my feet and he became both my surgeon and nurse. I had a long dispute with my people, who would not, for sometime, suffer me to look at myself in a glass, for fear I should be disconcerted with my appearance. For fifteen days I was obliged to keep my bed and to be carried about like a child. A few days after my arrival the clerk who had been my companion, came to see me. He had caught the horses, but could not find our encampment, and arrived on the 4th. day in a most deplorable state at the mountain la Bosse. Every effort I found had been resorted to in order to find me. It was very gratifying to me to learn I was so dear to my friends. Every one thought me dead. The Indians said it was impossible I could be alive, and when anyone spoke of me, it was "the poor deceased Pritchard." Even many of my people were afraid to pass near my chamber in the night, for fear of seeing my ghost.

The Kinistino Indians call me the Manitou, or Great Spirit, and some of them (according to their superstitious way of thinking,) go so far as to say I possess a certain stone, which preserves me from all danger; as they can never suppose a white man could endure such misery. Even the mosquitos they say were enough to kill me: indeed being naked, I suffered much from that insect; The Assiniboine Indians, call me the Cheepi, which signifies a corpse, as such was my appearance when they found me.

I shall now make some general remarks. In the first place let us learn this lesson: that there is no situation in life however distressing and miserable, but that it is in the power of the divine Providence to ameliorate. I suffered greatly by a kind of grass very common in the plains, called by the Canadians and very justly, the thorn grass. ⁹ Even your shoes and leather breeches it finds its

⁹ *Stipa spartea*, porcupine or spear grass.

way through. At night when I encamped my legs had the appearance of a porcupine. I durst not take them out in the day, as others would immediately enter, and at night you may suppose the blood flowed. I once found a few raspberries, and I once killed and skinned a snake in order to eat it, but supposing it poison, threw it away and resigned myself to God. Both Indians and white people who saw me, said they had seen the bodies of men dead from hunger, but never saw one so disfigured as mine. After some of the first days were passed, and I supposed death inevitable, pleasant serenity took possession of my mind, and I amused myself with admiring the infinite goodness, power and wisdom of the Almighty.

It was our universal Father that supported me, or it would be impossible for human nature to endure what I did. I never saw two days without rain, and in that case could make no fire, the grass being too wet to kindle, and I too weak to break wood, therefore the wet grass received my naked body for the night. You may imagine I did not sleep, and that I anxiously watched for the rising sun to warm my blood. Let us admire God's goodness, for who, but He, made me to suppose that I saw Indians in a different route from that my ideas were taking me, and by that means brought me to the houses—who, but He made me so miraculously to discover where I was, and who but He supported me and comforted me till I found the Indians.

SECOND LETTER.

(EXTRACT.)

This letter gives some glimpses of the ordinary life of the early settlers in the Red River Valley. The references to the Rev. D. Jones are very interesting as that gentleman was one of the founders of Church work in our colony—the successor of the first clergyman, the Rev. J. West.

Red River,

July 26th, 1825.

“I will mention a few of the occupations and general routine of my life when not employed in the factory. Mrs. P and the children join me, or rather I them, in cultivating the farm or garden, by which means we raise wheat and vegetables nearly sufficient for our maintenance and clothing. We have three cows and three calves, which gives us a sufficiency of butter, milk, and sometimes Mrs. P. treats me to a small cheese. Fishing and hunting afford a profitable amusement. These are my general employments of the week during the summer, beyond a part of each day given to the education of my children.

Our Sundays are given to the attendance of two churches, one above, and one below our residence, about an equal distance of three miles. My winter avocations are more domesticated. The long evenings and exclusion from all out door objects gives me leisure to educate my children and improve my own mind * * * I have before observed we have two Protestant churches, they are principally supported by the Church Missionary Society. They also have established a school for the education of native Indian children, and the settlers maintain another school for their children. Mr. Jones, a gentleman from New South Wales, is the present officiating clergyman.

We are informed that Mr. Cochraue is coming out to him as his assistant. In Mr. Jones we are peculiarly blessed. He is indefatigable in the duties of his sacred calling. * * I have the happiness to be particularly intimate with Mr. Jones which I consider the greatest blessing of my life. Soon after he arrived, a congeniality of miad united us, a more intimate acquaintance, I trust, has cemented our friendship in those bonds which the world cannot break. In addition to the public worship on Sundays, we meet for social prayer two evenings in the week. The places of meeting are alternately at the schoolhouse, or the private dwelling of one of ourselves. We communicate about six times in the year. At first the Communicants were very few in number, but are continually increasing. The last time we exceeded 60."

THIRD LETTER.
FLOOD OF 1826.

Red River.

August 2nd., 1826.

With feelings of gratitude to Almighty God, who, though he has afflicted, yet has spared; and in His wrath thought upon mercy, I have to relate a most calamitous event which visited us this spring.

About the 30th of April the ice on the Red River began to give way in particular places, but did not generally break up till the first week in May, when it presented a scene of devastation dreadful to contemplate and very difficult to describe. I have before informed you, that this country is formed of one large plain of many hundred miles in extent, its western boundary, the Rocky Mountains, its southern I cannot describe, but I suppose some-where about New Mexico. It is intersected with very few rivers and the few eminences to be met with, scarcely deserve the name of hills. I find it necessary to make these observations to enable you to form some idea of the terrific scene we have witnessed.

When the ice broke up in our neighborhood, it was late in the evening. The night was dark and stormy, accompanied with rain. The flood at once rose higher than ever known by man. The crashing of immense masses of ice was loud as thunder; neither the tallest poplar nor the stoutest oak could resist its impetuosity. They were mowed down like grass before the scythe. The inhabitants fled from their dwellings, and with their cattle sought safety upon the first high lands that presented themselves.

The water continued to rise, but not so rapidly as at first. As it rose the poor settlers daily retired and continued their sorrowful route until those on the east bank reached a hill at about eight miles, and those on the west another at about nine miles distance. 10 From the

10 Bird's Hill on the east : Stony Mountain on the west.

heights they had the cheerless prospect of one general ruin. Far as the eye could discover, the earth was covered with water carrying on its surface the wreck of a whole colony. Houses, barns, stables, fences, and in fact all that could float was a prey to the destructive element. The water continued to rise till the beginning of June. It then began to fall though by slow degrees. As it retired, we retraced our steps and from the middle of that month till the early part of July, we planted potatoes, barley, and some wheat upon such lands as the water had left; and I am extremely happy to say that what we so planted looks well and through the blessings of the Almighty now promises a sufficiency for man and beast.

You may form some idea of the extent of this flood by considering the river whose usual breadth may be compared with the Severn at Shrewsbury having expanded itself over a surface of more than seventeen miles; which is the distance between the hills on which the settlers took refuge. There of course it was contracted and its width above must have been considerably greater. The depth was thirty-five feet above its common level being more than twenty feet higher than the former flood which was considered a very high one. It is worthy of remark that the three churches, the residence of the clergy and the house of our social prayer meeting, with the exception of the windmill, should be the only buildings which have not been carried away, or so much injured as not to deserve notice. It is no less remarkable that the sites of these buildings were not chosen on account of their elevated situation, but on account of their central position.

I have now given you the outlines of this disastrous event, and turn in grateful remembrance to Him who directs all things; who in exhibiting the greatness of His power, and the justness of His wisdom, did not withhold his merciful kindness. Incredible as it may appear, not one human life has been lost, and so few cattle perished that they are not worth mentioning.

I am writing this on the site of my usual residence. I returned the day before yesterday after an absence of

twelve weeks. I am living under a shed of boards, but before the winter sets in I hope to have a comfortable house. A considerable number of the settlers have left the country and gone to the United States, a few others will return to Europe. The old residents still remain and are very actively employed in re-establishing things as heretofore; so that I expect next summer the remembrance of the flood alone will be retained. To view the country now and compare it with what it was a few weeks ago—a sea of devastation or desolation—it is impossible not to exclaim “O Lord how wonderful are thy works! Truly the wilderness has become a “fruitful field” and “the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose.”

Extract from letter Aug. 21st. 1826.

Since my last we have received further accounts of the recent flood and I very much fear for the safety of the American settlements on the lower parts of the Missouri, and St. Peter's Rivers. Report says that some of their military posts have been overwhelmed and many soldiers drowned. We are also informed that several Indian villages have fallen victims to these destructive waters. It is now clearly ascertained that they flowed from the Rocky Mountains and passing over the banks of the Missouri (their usual channel to the Gulf of Mexico) overflowed the adjacent country; and were conducted here by the Riviere a la Souris which falls into the Assiniboine River about one hundred miles from this place.

Our crops continue to look well: both wheat and barley are in full ear and the potatoes sufficiently large for the table. When you consider that seven or eight weeks ago we were only sowing after the flood you will join in praise to Him in whom we live and move and have our being, for His providential care towards His creatures

FOURTH LETTER.

(EXTRACT.)

Red River, Aug. 4th, 1828.

Our Church, (11) which was built by voluntary contributions from the settlers, is now receiving such additional improvements as will in the end, give it a solidity and beauty that would be creditable to any village church in England

The attendance given to our Sunday School is very encouraging and I hope some fruit is discernible already. We can only sow, and pray the Lord of the Harvest for the school. The teachers with few exceptions are natives. Did I inform you that Mrs. Cochran is educating several of the Company's Chief Factors daughters who board at her house. This is another source of comfort to me, and adds much to the pleasure of our Wednesday evenings. It is truly refreshing to join these children of the wilderness in their evening hymn of praise to the God who has created, preserved and redeemed their souls. The settlement in general is advancing to prosperity with rapid strides, but what is most to be admired is the moral feeling that prevails amongst the settlers. Theft and open crime are here unknown. I have the honor to be one of the Council; and, with exception of a trivial assault case four years ago, not a single case tinged with crime has been brought under our consideration, so that you will perceive the Penal Code is with us a dead letter. This speaks volumes and can scarcely meet its parallel in the civilized world; and when I consider that the largest portion of our population has been drawn from the wilds that surround us, it is truly astonishing, and cannot fail to call forth praise and thanksgivings to the Divine Providence which so eminently watches over us. The high water last year prevented the sheep being sent, but we have information of their being on the way. My excellent friend Mr. Jones is the bearer of this to London

FIFTH LETTER.
PROGRESS OF CHURCH AND COUNTRY.

Red River, July 20th. 1832.

I shall begin with the source of all our blessings—the Church. Our congregation now consists of all the inhabitants that can possibly attend, and the number of our communicants is so far increased that of themselves they would form a respectable congregation. I believe I informed you that Mrs. Simpson had joined those who rejoiced in the hope set before them, and now I have the pleasure to say her husband, the Governor, is become decidedly religious. In his conversion the power of the grace of God has been most effectually displayed. I believe few instances of recent date are on record of such a change as the Almighty has wrought in the heart of Governor Simpson. To the cause of religion in this country the support of so powerful a man is incalculable, and it appears to me one of those miraculous events by which the Almighty makes known His love to His creatures by showing the wonderful power of his grace in the promotion of his own glory and the salvation of sinners.

In our Sunday School we have great reason to rejoice both in the number and behaviour of attendants. You will be delighted to know that at both our churches we have a congregation of Indians, who with their wives and children attend on the Sunday evenings. These poor people have found that the offence of the cross has not ceased, for they have encountered the persecution, sufferings, and ridicule of their unconverted brethren; but their faith has not given way. We are therefore led confidently to hope that He who began the good work will carry it on until their faith shall be with glory crowned.

At the lower end of the settlement (12) Mr. Cochrane has a neat church, which the poor inhabitants built at their own expense. It was consecrated in May last. The upper church, at which Mr. Jones resides, being out of repair and besides much too small, we resolved to build a new

12. St. Andrew's parish.

one of stone. In December last the Governor, Mr. Jones, another gentleman, and myself, after breakfast, went down the settlement to the distance of four miles to collect a voluntary contribution and we returned to dinner with a subscription of more than £600. It is delightful to see with what zeal the Indians collect and carry stones to the place. Labor is all they have to offer and that they give with a cheerful heart.

The country in general is in the most promising state of prosperity. We have formed a Tallow Company with every prospect of success. It consists of two hundred shares and is placed under the management of six directors, three of whom in the absence of the Governor take the chair in rotation. The Governor in his present capacity is a considerable stockholder. I have the honor to be elected of one of the latter which is so far agreeable to my feelings; and it stamps the public approbation of my management of the Buffalo Wool Company, which although unfortunate in its result (being ruined by the flood of 1826) was productive of good to the settlement during its operation, the beneficial effects of which are felt to this day.

The object of the Tallow Company is the exportation of that article to Europe and we have every reason to expect that we can compete with Russia on terms highly advantageous to ourselves. We have a better climate, a more extensive pasturage, and a greater facility in the export of our goods to market. Our present breeding stock amounts to more than six hundred head, and next spring we shall add as many more. Our flax fields are particularly good and fine; and indeed so are all our crops. Great encouragement is offered by the Governor and prizes awarded to the best growers and spinners of flax of which we expect to ship considerable quantities home in a few years.

Our flock of sheep is wonderfully increased and we are now in daily expectation of 3,000 more from the United States. It would cheer your heart to see our School of Industry, which is directed by Mr. Cochrane, in which Indian girls and other poor children are taught to make their own clothing, and to know the God in whom they live and move and have their being.

SIXTH LETTER.

CONCLUSION.

The Elms, Red River, Aug. 8th, 1833.

Our new church is going on very rapidly. In addition to the subscription mentioned in my last, the settlers volunteered to bring the stones to the builder gratis. I am sorry to inform you both the Governor and Mrs. Simpson are obliged to return to Europe on account of his health. I pray God to restore them to the station they hold with so much credit to themselves and of benefit to the colonists.

Our church increases daily and since I wrote last I hope that many have been added to the number of those that shall be finally saved. At Easter, the number of communicants was great. Indeed I never felt myself so happy as on that occasion. I still continue to enjoy every blessing my heart can desire on this side of the grave.

I think you will be gratified when you read the annexed copy of the Resolve in Council. It was unsought for and unsuspected, nor had I any knowledge of the circumstances till it was forwarded to me by the Governor's secretary after his departure for Europe

COPY.

The Council having learnt with much satisfaction that the cause of religion and education is much advanced at the Red River Settlement by the establishment of Sunday Schools and that Mr. Pritchard has rendered his valuable services gratuitously for several years past; moreover, that that gentleman has established day schools for the education of the youth of both sexes in his neighborhood, which are attended by many children whose parents cannot afford to pay for their instruction, Resolved: That in order to encourage the laudable and highly useful objects in question, the sum of £25 shall, per annum, be allowed to Mr. Pritchard to allow him to carry on his views of benevolence.

[*The End.*]

EDITORS' NOTE.

We are now come to the conclusion of these letters. They afford both interesting and instructive glimpses of the lives of the pioneers of civilization in this land. We owe a good deal to these brave, hardy men, and the printing of these few pages will place within reach of those who are interested in such matters, a permanent memento of one of their number. We must acknowledge our obligations to the Rev. S. Pritchard of Benson, Minnesota, and the Rev. Canon Matheson, of St. John's, Winnipeg, for the loan of valuable manuscripts, and to Rev. Prof Bryce of Winnipeg, for his valuable notes on the letters.

It will be noticed that the date of the last letter is somewhat earlier than given in the title. This was caused by the fact that the title page was printed before it was seen that the last letters were of a purely private character, and therefore among those not to be published.

Editors, RUPERT'S LAND GLEANER.

[*From which Magazine the letters are reprinted.*]



