

II

Arrival of the Missionaries at Lake Gannantahaa. Their Reception by the Onnondagas.

On the eleventh of June, at three o'clock, as stated above, the party, having successfully arrived at the head of Gannantahaa River, joyfully passed ^{over} ~~on the water of~~ the lake of the same name.

Now with Lake Gannantahaa unfolding its charming sheet of water before their eyes, and cheered by the actual vision of their final goal, *looming up before their gaze, our Pilgrims kept progressing* ~~our Argonauts kept gaily their gentle and light fleet~~ *cheerfully* ~~into motion toward their last objective~~ *placed at the further end of the lake.* ~~of the present lake...~~

But refraining however from making it on one stretch, a little less than a mile *within reach* ~~from their terminal point~~ they drew ashore for a moment's halt before effectuating their definite stop. Taking five of their heaviest artillery unities ^{off} ~~from~~ the unstable crafts that carried them, and *setting them on the shore, for soliditiy's sake* ~~being made to rest now on a firm fundamental base~~ *which, as soon as loaded, were fired out.* ~~afforded by the immobility of the shore, and which being loaded they~~ ~~fired~~..... The thunder-like rambling report followed immediately by the discharge of all the arquebuses of the crew was the first salute the French sent forth to the inhabitants of the country. The whole resounding power of those cast-iron throats combined with the firing of forty or fifty rifles, hurled their bewildering waves, says the French Relation, far over the water, which by travelling in the infinite space above, carried their resounding repercussion far through the atmosphere and the surrounding forests with a marvellous effect to the ears. Then the French pioneers launched again their little fleet, and this time for a definite landing. The limited distance left ahead of them, afforded no chance for any important spectacular evolution, only that all the boats were made to advance in parallel lines of four abreast, all paddled in perfect cadency. After operating their final landing, a second military salute was executed like the first, and with so much dexterity as to strike with wonderment the whole crowd of ~~curious~~ *attracted by the* Indians ~~standing in at-~~ *strangeness of pageantry*

and standing in
~~titides~~ of wonderment on the shore.

On the very bank of the lake, two tribunes had been put up by order of the elders for the fathers to stand with their suite, and be duly welcomed with address and harangues uttered by the best authorized mouth-pieces of the nation.

Everything was being done grandly and courteously according to Indian protocol, when, alas! *a mischievous cloud laden with rain* ~~for the discomfiture of the performers, there burst, all of a sudden, a most untimely shower that~~ *happened to loosen its content into a downright pouring* ~~showers upon the head of the dignified performers~~ obliged both harangued and haranguers to scamper away under nearest *without regard for the conventional rule of civility.* shelters, This abrupt and prosaic evolution had not been foreseen, of course, nor included in the program either; it is why that atmospheric unpleasantness would have not happened without causing a certain amount of confusion in the middle of the ceremony. Nevertheless, after all the personages were well under roof, the officious did continue, but with less inspiration and exterior solemnity...

It is, it seems, characteristic of that skulky and wild race to be demonstrative and exaggerate in the expression of their joys and affections by resorting to what is most in flattering word and demonstrative acts; as also are they inversely exaggerated in their resentment and hatred, by recurring to acts of extra-cruelty. However the Iroquois on this occasion manifested the sentiments of their hearts, not only by words full of tenderness and flattery as the old Relation has it, but moreover by their eyes, their gesticulations and their whole countenance--chanting and dancing around the cabins where the missionaries had retired, forced by accumulated *from* ~~fatigues~~ their long journey to take a Beneficent rest. Then the Indians' delicateness of sentiment toward the Fathers went to that extent as to concur even to their rest by songs best adapted to soothe their spirits and induce Morpheus to lull them into a calm and restful sleep.

On the ensuing morning, the twelfth of July, seeing themselves on awakening, safe and rested after an immense journey full of

perils, with their feet on solid ground and according to all prospects full of promise; and ⁴⁰was it with a deep sentiment of gratitude to God, that the Missionaries and their group felt disposed to join in for the chanting of the great Latin hymn of the "Te Deum" to render homage to the Divine Majesty ~~for~~ the happy termination of their ^{peregrination.} That simple act of religion was followed immediately by a greater one--the Holy Mass, which was said on an improvised ~~and~~ rustic altar, during which dedication was made to God's royalty in the name of the immolated victim, of the immense land newly entered upon.

The 16th of July, which was a Sunday, the first Lord's day the pilgrims ever saw rise on the Iroquois soil, was a day of vivid impressions and of a special souvenir; the souvenir of ~~a~~ ^{had} promise they had made to God, by which they ^{had} pledged themselves to receive Holy Communion in a body to obtain from God aid and protection for a safe passage through all the dangers of the route and to arrive all uninjured to the term of their journey. Now being granted the favor, they all approached the Sacrament of the Altar at a High Mass chanted with all the solemnity possible according to local resources.

The following day, the whole staff was advised to be in readiness for the preliminary work towards building the necessary lodgements destined to shelter the different communities, and other dependencies to answer all the requirements of the Mission to operate well.

The site was on an eminence, with a commanding view upon the whole lake and the surrounding country. A place as advantageous as it was beautiful, with sources of soft water in abundance in the surrounding ground.

of men of all trades entirely devoted to the missionaries, the mission was in a short time and in a fair shape, the supplied with the necessary set of buildings, which afterward were surrounded with a good palisade by manner of fortification.

Rev. Father Lamercier, the Superior--who by God's kindness, had recovered from sickness, taking with him fifteen of the men, presumably selecting those best endowed with walking ability, leaving the others at work, started on a march of twelve miles to Onondaga Village on an official visit to its inhabitants.

The people, upon information of their coming, started in a large number to meet them on the way. On confronting the visiting party, they turned back and started accompanying the group toward the village, as ^{an} escort of honor. Divided in two rows, occupying both sides of the road, they kept marching in solemn silence. The mere sight of those strangers, dressed in such a fashion as the military French uniform, so contrasting with the loose and primitive Indian ^{fashion} form of clothes, was quite a spectacle for these ^{barbarians} people, who, but for a few exceptions had never contemplated such human beings in their lives. No wonder, then, if the admiration it produced upon those natures ~~imposed silence to their tongues while looking at them.~~ ^{under the spell of wonder-} ~~meant they kept mute...~~

~~Thus the whole convoy proceeded walking until it had but one mile to reach the term, when one of the Onondaga Elders required the imposing procession to halt a few moments for taking breath.~~ ^{kept marching down until told by an Elder to hold a few moments for the benefit of taking breath.} ~~Now, while the French had Visitors were resting their tired limbs in the shade, an~~ ^{was then a miles distance about from the village. (Onondaga)} ~~flattered by other harangue was delivered to them~~ ^{the French had Visitors were resting their tired limbs in the shade, an} ~~had their ears were a sort of harangue delivered by the most considerable captain of the country. After conclusion,~~ ^{by the very Grand Chief of the Onondagas, for the purpose of welcoming (1) On concluding,}

self took the lead of the march, the French following between the two lines of people. The missionaries in full Jesuit attire were coming behind him, followed up by a captain to prevent the crowd from coming too close to him. On reaching the village's ^{border line} precinct,

Father Lamercier's men fired their arquebuses in a salvo which ^{afforded} gave all the natives much to enjoy and admire.

(1) that most representative portion of the French Mission, congratulating them for their coming, affording thereby to ~~them~~ himself and to all his people so much gratification and pleasure. The whole of it was expressed with figures of language taken from the very nature so proper to Indian style

The cabin of the most notable captain was thrown open to let these rare visitors in. They were treated with a surprising civility by those so redoubted Indians, one would suppose totally devoid of delicateness of sentiment and courtesy... Fruits of all kinds, in their natural growth from incult nature, meat proceeding directly from the hunt, all what they had best in matter of food was set before them, spontaneously and copiously, during the ten days which Father Superior (Achiendase) as called by the Iroquois, had to spend among them. This portion of time was more than well filled by the Jesuit, employing himself in diplomatic interviews with the deputies from different nations of the Iroquois Confederation, assisting at their public councils in which presents were exchanged in token and in testimony of ~~their~~ mutual good will, preparing thus the ground for the sowing of God's Holy Word and disposed these barbarian natures to the acceptance of the Faith.

On the twenty-fourth of July, the Onnondaga castle was inundated by an extraordinary concourse of people. Delegates from different nations had repaired thereto to attend a general council convoked by the Onnondaga chiefs to settle a serious 'casus belli' between the Sonontouans and the Mohawks who had recently killed a Sonontouan war captain in Three Rivers district, and at the same time to discuss among themselves the important question of the establishment of the French Catholic Mission at Lake Gannantaha. Never, according to any living Indian's memory had there been held such a numerous assembly on their land before.

The dispute between the two nations mentioned above, the solution of which had been committed to the judgment of ARchiendase was soon terminated. As to the French mission, all agreed with an extraordinary benevolence in having it established in their midst.

With the final agreement of the assembly on the debated questions, and judgments passed on matters subjected to discussion, the general council had reached its culminent point.

It ~~rested~~ ^{remained} presently for the assembly to pass on to the final item of its program-- the offering of presents. This ceremony was among the Indians of old, specially among the Iroquois, equivalent to the signing of treaties or contracts among civilized nations. These presents were offered and accepted reciprocally by the contracting parties, as tokens of their mutual purpose to stand by the things ~~agreed upon~~, or as a public act attesting their engagement and destined to make both interested parties reciprocally secured against failure on the part of the other in fulfilling the agreement expressed by the proffered gifts.

The Missionaries, in provision of these conventionalities of Indian diplomacy in these countries, had not come to this international council with empty hands. Ten presents ^{which they had with them} were produced by them to the ^{gaze} (eyes) of the national assembly.

The handing of presents in like circumstance, was vested with a particular solemnity, and the occasion for the Indians, especially the Iroquois, who were great haranguers, of remarkable ^{achievements} ~~efforts~~ of oratory art, in the interpretation and explanation of those presents, as each had to be distinctly commented ^{upon} separately and specifically.

It fell upon Father Chaumonot to fulfill this function in the name of his Confreres in the present occasion as he knew and talked the Iroquois language with the fluency and perfection of one born an Iroquois, and which he did in a way which gave credit to his ability.

^{Meanwhile,} ~~Meantime,~~ the whole assembly was eagerly waiting in silence for the first present to be held up to their gaze by the Missionary. But at this moment something else took place quite unexpectedly for the assistants. At a signal given, the Missionaries and the French laymen fell on their knees; hats removed and hands joined in

prayer, they started the Latin hymn Veni Creator which they all sang with a loud and vigorous intonation up to the end with an all-soul accent. This liturgical song produced a tremendous effect over all those present.

Then Father Chaumonot rising from his knees, proceeded to the presentation of ten beautiful presents, consisting of wampumbelts, made to soothe their ^{grief} presented from the death of many of their estimable captains killed recently at war, and wipe away the tears which were still wetting their faces.

Some of these presents were destined also to make revive in the Faith some brave Christian men and women of their nation who had passed away in the Lord after the insign happiness of being made children of God through Baptism. Then with an additional degree of force in his voice he said that Onondaga Village being by the importance of its Council-House held as the Capital of all the Iroquois Cantons-- Ahochiendagese, its Captain, being in this account the foremost Chief over all others in the country-- Achiendase (meaning Father Superior) as such, being Onontio's (meaning the Governor of Quebec) spokesman, came over therefore to this country to join and help Ahochiendagese to rebuild the fallen cabins and keep the good ones from crumbling, and especially to defend the country against all perturbators of the peace.

The father offered two other presents, as recognition and thankfulness for the splendid and courteous welcome tendered to the missionaries and their party on their arrival among them, and for

their insistence in inviting them to come and abide in their midst. The second was to engage them to put afloat one canoe with messengers to bring the good news to Onontio, and the Fathers at Quebec.

All these and many other friendly and courteous comments voiced by the father over each present were listened to with signs of great satisfaction and wonderment at his doing things so well in accordance with their own ways.

After presenting the last gift, Father Chaumonot, raising the tone of his voice with a supplementary accent of inspiration, started on a new theme: "Dear Cousins of mine," he began, "if you presently see us in this country of yours, it is for motives and aim other than temporal gain, such as would the vulgar profession of traders. In coming here our eyes are visualizing things of a higher nature and more substantial. Your furs are too little in value before our eyes to induce us to undertake a voyage like the one we have accomplished, so beset with incredible hardships and infinite dangers. Keep your beavers for the common traders with whom you entertain commercial relations; even those that would incidentally fall into our hands would be employed for your benefit. We do not look for perishable things. Faith is all what could induce us to quit our own country, to abandon parents, relatives and friends. In behalf of the Faith uniquely have we come across the vast ocean over to Quebec first, and then from our large ships of Europe have we ~~passed into~~ ^{been landing} your narrow and thin bark canoes like yours and started paddling, bended knees, the whole way long up to this remote country of yours, for the same purpose ~~have we~~ abandoned our spacious and commodious habitations to take up our abode under bark roofs. For the Faith and Faith alone have we equally renounced the sweet and tasty dishes to which our stomachs had been accustomed since infancy, to partake of your saganity (corn grit) which

would be despised even by the poorest of the poor in France."

Then taking a wampumbelt (Collier de Porcelain) of a very skilfull workmanship, the Missionary continued;

"For the Faith.. the Faith alone am I holding up this rich present, and I open my mouth to summon you to remember the pledge you took when you went to Quebec, where you pleaded for our coming to your country. There you promised solemnly that you would lend an open ear to the word of the God of Heaven and earth. This word of God is in my mouth, listen to it. I am one of his messengers whom he has sent to give you advice that His Son was made man for our salvation; that this God made Man is as much a God as His Divine Eternal Father, and is as much as His Father the Prince of the world, the Master of life and the ruler of all men. As supreme God, He has prepared in His heaven, His eternal dwelling, infinite and endless pleasures for those who would believe His word and observe His commandments; whereas He has lighted a horrible and eternal fire in the depth of eternal abyss, which we call hell, for the torment of those who would dare refuse to add Faith to His Divine Doctrine.

Nothing is there to be found in this doctrine but what is most reasonable. It commands us to honor, to love and acknowledge Him as the Author of all things whatsoever the universe contains. Would one's reason and mind dare to rebel against truths so sane and so conformed to our nature? Jesus Christ who is the Son of Him who has made all things, who has come into this world, is the very reason why my associates and I appear before you in your very

country as all other apostles like us sent by the same Master to all other countries of the earth. It is this command of the Lord God of Heaven that opens our mouths and loosens our tongues to speak. We are so sure of the truth of all what we teach in the name of the Lord that we would willingly give up our lives to maintain them if it were necessary. If ye rebuke them in your heart let it be known to ye all, Mohawks, Onondagas, Sonnontouans, Oneidas and Cayugas that Jesus Christ who animated my heart and my voice shall justify Himself against all charges of unjust *ice* severity whatsoever your despaired souls might hurl from the centre of eternal flames as chastisement due to infidelity.

Therefore spare yourselves that awful doom by your submission to the saving law. Be converted. Be ye not the cause of ~~your~~ own perdition. Obey the ruling power of the most High." This language full of apostolic boldness and liberty was heard with a religious silence. Although unaccustomed to hear such things, the ears that heard them, bore them without provoking the least murmur nor manifesting the least sign of impatience. The eyes of the hearers, their mouths, all their countenance gave evidence of an immense and deep impression produced in the bottom of their souls. Satisfaction together with amazement were filling their hearts, and the approbation was general.

St. Paul had not produced greater stupefaction by his famous speech in the old city of Athens than did Father Chau~~monot~~'s address to this areopage of illiterate barbarians gathered at Onondaga; with the difference that the Apostle was refused audition to the end of his speech and approbation denied him, whereas Father Chau~~monot~~'s audience was kept under the spell of wonderment and pleasurable interest up to the conclusion which was marked by an explosion of approbative cheers, and felicitations.

On the following morning, 25th of July the sun had hardly risen entirely above the horizon when the deputies of all these nations, in a hurry to leave for their respective countries, and still under the spell of enthusiasm from the previous evening, came to bid goodbye to the Missionaries, with a formula of their own which they accompanied with most amiable and cordial thanks.

On the 27th the Missionaries and their party returned to Lake Gannantaha; they found the men busy pushing with ardor the construction work of the new mission to be called Ste. Marie of Gannantaha, (in memory of their beloved Mission Ste. Marie, at the Humons', which was no more, having been devastated by the Iroquois in 1649) Already the compact of buildings to be raised, including the chapel were in full course of erection, a sign that the staff left there had been far from idle.

Meantime also with the material work going on at Lake Gannantaha, the spiritual had its full attention on the part of the Missionaries at Onondaga first, consisting in catechising in the already existing little chapel, visiting the cabins, baptizing the babies and instructing the sick, baptizing them to procure them the happiness of a Christian death. The ministry work kept them busy from morning till night. On invitations from the other villages, the Jesuits pushed their apostolic course^s, even onto the Cayucas, with Father Rene Menard as Pastor, and the Sonnontouans where Father Chaumonot worked at founding a mission of great promise.

Unfortunately such splendid and promising beginnings answered not the confident hopes the Founder had conceived therefrom.

It was not long until the seeming peace atmosphere in which they had been moving, became disturbed by rumors of war coming from different sections of the country. One year of peace had hardly been enjoyed and already the Iroquois resented the weight of it on their warring humor. In this mood forgetting their solemn engagements, they had anew resorted to acts of hostility against the French of Quebec and Montreal during the last season and had made victims among them.

The Mohawks on their part who had never been quite reconciled with that treaty of peace of one and a half year previous~~x~~, did not want it to live. Making war propaganda among their sister tribes they succeeded in making prosylites in their midst. Already regiments of warriors had entered into campaign towards the regions of the great St. Lawrence, the usual field of discords. While in their home country, councils of war were being held, in which decision was reached and agreed upon by a large representation to exterminate, when circumstances should be deemed favorable, all the inmates of the French Mission established at Lake Cannan-taha.

All these plottings were to be kept secret, of course; but the French pioneers were not without a suspicion as to what was taking place in the 'sancta sacntorum' of the council-lodges of these peoples.

Many signs were there in the surrounding atmosphere warning the missionaries of a storm being in preparation overhead. Things were at that point when an authentic report of what was going on reached the superior of the mission.

Through God's ^{good Providence} ~~will~~, a certain kind and sympathetic Chief acquainted with the resolution passed at the council of the nations, declared to the missionaries all about the danger that was menacing the whole mission.