

Col. G. H. General
147

RUPERT'S LAND.

The Parsonage, St. James, Assiniboin,
Rupert's Land, June 1st, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—It was my intention to write to you at some length by this post, but I fear I must be a little concise. The circumstances under which I now write are very much altered, and these seem to justify me in writing to you so briefly,—at least, if they do not justify, be good enough to allow me to think that they will excuse me. I find that my dear wife has already written to Mrs. Gear, and has told her of the direful calamity, which, in God's providence, has been permitted to come upon this land. The flowing of the rivers has laid it under water to the depth of several feet for miles. It is more like a lake than a river; it is computed to be ten or twelve miles wide. The Indians who wait upon the Bishop, said, Oh, this is like Winnepeg Sea. It has occasioned the vacation of dwellings, and has put it out of the power of the farmers to sow their fields and farms as usual. I ought, however, to tell you the news in something like order, and would enter into it largely, but that I am so occupied, and feel but little relish for a long turn at the pen; and besides, you have often seen an overflowing, and know the sad consequences and effects so well, that you can guess at a great deal, if I give you a few leading features in connexion with it, as we have so lately experienced.

I think I must have told you what a delightful winter we had. All so well, so joyful, so prosperous, and everything giving so much promise for the future. Alas! how vain are our hopes and wishes; and how soon a turn in the hand of Divine providence can make a complete and, to us, a melancholy change! The spring came on with the usual signs,—the warm genial sunshine, the singing of birds, the melting of the snow, the gentle swelling of the river, the cracking and breaking up of the ice. Only once they led us to fear a more than usual rise,—the high state of the river, and its gentle and almost daily increase. Some old persons concluded, from certain indications, which appeared probable enough, that there would be high water;

viz. the high state of Lake Winnepeg in the north, Red Lake, &c. in the south, and the state of the river itself, being a little higher than usual in the fall and winter. But most of us were quite unwilling to take too much notice of these things, and all hoped that the melting of the snow, of which there certainly was a vast quantity, would pass off without any serious or even considerable interruption to the ordinary course of things. On the 2d May the ice was carried off. It was, to be sure, a tremendous rush, both down the Assiniboin and the main river. It caused a great swell, as I have said, and for days it continued to increase. The frost went off gradually, and we thought of the flowers and the gardens. The grass was springing up rapidly, and everything putting on a cheerful look. The river filled us with alarm; at last it began to cover the points, and then houses, in the low places, were gradually covered on the ground floors, and families were shifting to other spots. All the little streams gradually filled and stopped intercourse, the bridges were floating or unsafe, and then fears for the worst began to be entertained. Persons began to look out for spots of safety, to which they might convey their families and goods. Tents and boats were in great requisition. Every day saw some families driven out, and then it was that a day of humiliation and fasting was proclaimed. It was most religiously kept and observed; and though the dread visitation was not abated, yet we do believe that much mercy has been shown to us, as a people, under this great trial, and, no doubt, owing to our humility and turning to God. I should like to send you a copy, and will do so, if I have time to make one out fairly.

Before the waters had risen to any great height, I had come up to St. James, hoping to get the house soon ready to bring up my family. The waters rose upon us so gradually, yet surely—4 inches in the day, and 3½ in the night, &c., and giving about 8 every 24 hours—that Mrs. Taylor soon followed me; and the Bishop and his family began to make preparations to join us. On Sunday, the 9th, the water had gotten to the stable and yard of his Lordship, and was within a few feet of his own dwelling. Service was held in the church in the morning, and by evening it was at the church door. On Monday the Bishop's family came up hither; the dear boys with the grateful nurse, the farm servants with all the stock of poultry, cows, and some of the pupils, &c.

But I am overrunning my history. On the Thursday previous, the schools were broken up, the St. Cross establishment was disbanded, and poor Mrs. Mills and her daughter taken by Mr. Colvile, the County Governor, to lower Fort Curry. Thus the boys and girls were sent home, and the students sent off as they could be provided for. The poor Bishop and his sister were unwilling to quit the house till obliged, and really stayed in, with a servant or two, till the water was two feet over the floors. This was the increase of as many days. At last they took refuge at St. James, and here soon began to recover from their depression and weariness.

We were not without fears that the Assiniboin might really overflow

this spot, as our nearest neighbours below were driven out, and began to prepare for a start, stacking the lumber and fencing, and securing all that we were afraid might be carried off. But in mercy, this spot has been saved. It is a little Zoar. It afforded refuge for the poor colonists, with Rev. Messrs. Jones and Achran, in the year 1826, and now it has again been the place of safety and refuge for a poor homeless, houseless population. Our glebe has been almost covered with rude tents, and families in rude dwellings; and 300 or more of boards were lent to form tents for the few families, twenty or thirty, &c. to each family. We have had as many as thirty-five lodging in the house, and on Sundays it has served us as a church. In fine weather we have formed a rude sort of church out in front of the door, and the service has been performed in the front hall or passage. Thus has mercy been mingled with judgment, and the weather has been most delightful. At the little mountain, six miles right out, there is a large encampment. At that place one of the students has resided, and kept school, &c.; and on Sunday morning the Bishop and myself have ridden out alternately for service. Thus we have been compelled to adopt the plan which many of our brethren in England choose to do—service in the open air. Then at the Oreal Stone mountain, six miles further, and about opposite to the Middle or St. Paul's church, the people of that district assembled. For some time, Rev. Br. Chapman and his family lived in the tower of the church; but finding all his people obliged to betake themselves to the mountain, and fearing that even the tower might give way in the beating and dashing of the waves, he joined them at the mountain, and sent his wife and child to Mr. Cochran's, at the Indian village. This part of the settlement has been saved. It is only the middle portion which has been so dreadfully scourged—say between twenty and thirty miles of settled habitations and cultivated farms. The Scotch community, with their preacher, fled to a little mountain just out from their part of the settlement. You will imagine that the loss of property is very great. Yes, it is so; houses and dwellings are gone; barns and stables are swept away; lumber and firewood, with almost all the pole fencing, is carried away, and by this time is floating in Hudson's Bay or the North Sea. A large barn, filled with wheat, rested on the Bishop's land, and near his door; and houses and barns, and other buildings, were seen to be thus transferred. Very little of thrashed wheat has been lost; flour is raised very much in price, and is likely to be still higher. During the prevailing of the waters, the winds have been very high, thus adding most fearfully to the desolate scene, and heightening the destruction of the poor frail tenements of the colony.

No human life, to our knowledge, has been sacrificed, except one instance, and that, sad enough, has been the Bishop's man cook. He was a long-trying and faithful servant, and had lived with the late Mr. Macalush, and then with his Lordship up to the distressful moment when he was called to an eternal world. It is rather melancholy to think that this solitary instance should have occurred in the Bishop's household.

I went
sister i
and th
I rema
till Sat
evenin
this pl
child
alone,
will be
catastr
The
lodged
the tab
been in
regaine
about f
and ru
station
it rose.
canoe a
about a
most p
great p
this we
north, a
stay at
former
tions o
little tr
We are
School.
but wh
his fare
difficult
Some o
St. Pau
in a bo
at last,
again, a
Pember
up, the
on, Sun
last We
examin
to the
owing
have be
Mr. C
NO.

t, and began
and securing
cy, this spot
for the poor
year 1826,
for a poor
most covered
or more of
ty or thirty,
e lodging in
ch. In fine
front of the
d or passage.
weather has
s right out,
students has
Bishop and
e have been
in England
Oreal Stone
e Middle or
For some
ower of the
selves to the
way in the
e mountain,
dian village.
y the middle
ween twenty
farms. The
ountain just
that the loss
wellings are
rewood, with
this time is
n, filled with
d houses and
erred. Very
very much in
prevailing of
most fearfully
of the poor

I went down to see them on the Wednesday, and his Lordship and his sister intended to leave for St. James on the next day; but it was windy, and the canoe could not put out. Early on the Friday they left, and I remained with this one man servant and two of the senior scholars till Saturday night. I joined the Bishop and his family here on that evening, and it appears that soon after my leaving the Bishop's for this place, the cook took it into his head to go and see his wife and child who were down at St. Andrew's. He started in a bateau alone, and has not since been seen or heard of. No doubt his body will be found when the waters shall have gone down. This sad catastrophe very much distressed his Lordship.

The Church was opened for a general store, and a great deal was lodged in it. The water was above the seats, and threw back, against the tablets on the east end, the pulpit and desk, but they have not been injured, and now that the water has fallen a little, they have regained their original position. In the Bishop's house the water was about forty inches, thus reaching a great way up the lower rooms, and running right through the doors and windows. It remained stationary for a day or two, and is now going down much the same as it rose. His Lordship has been supplied by Mr. Cochran, with a bark canoe and two Christian Indians to paddle it, so that he has gone about a good deal. Indeed, I may say, he has been most laborious, most patient, most submissive, under the grievous judgment, and his great pecuniary losses. He and his family go down to St. Andrew's this week. Mr. Hunter returns in a day or two to his station in the north, and till Rev. Mr. James shall arrive by ship, his Lordship will stay at the Grand Rapids. It has quite put down all the Bishop's former plans; he cannot keep, as far as I know and fear, his intentions of going east. I hope, however, he will be able to take a little trip to some of the out-stations for his own health and benefit. We are about to part with Mr. Predham, the master of the College School. He had intended to go by St. Paul's in Mr. Kitson's bateau, but whether or not he will now, I cannot say. He has gone to take his farewell below, and Mr. Kitson has left for Pembena. It will be difficult for him to get up. There is no moving about but by canoe. Some of the Pensioners were anxious to leave, and were going by St. Paul's to Canada. Only a few can now go, and they leave this in a boat for Pembena, this evening. Should poor Mr. Predham go at last, he will call upon you at Fort Snelling, and by him I will write again, as he need not leave just yet, for Kitson does not start from Pembena till the 15th. But we are told it takes twelve days to get up, the current is so strong. Mr. Thomas Cochran is to be ordained on Sunday next, Trinity Sunday. The examination took place here last Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. He passed a most creditable examination, and most satisfactory in every particular. I present him to the Bishop for imposition of hands. It takes place in St. Andrew's owing to this visitation; it would have been in St. John's, and so have been much more convenient than now at the Rapids.

Mr. Cochran will take the mastership in the College School in
NO. LXV.

the room of Mr. Predham, and for the present, until the buildings can be repaired, he will carry it on at the Indian village near his father's. The Bishop will try to have his college somehow near himself, but at present nothing can be arranged. The St. Cross school will soon be in working order again, as the water is clearing from the premises fast, and being a comparatively new building, will not be long in being rectified. I fear our new Church is put back for this summer. The oak logs are carried away, so we have been told, far up the Assiniboin, but we have not heard from the contractors as yet. It may be forth-coming, and then we shall be able to go on. We should have sent a few things, but we are quite upset. Thank you for the envelopes, they are beautiful. Best love to all your dear family. The Bishop is too much pressed to write now, he will do so soon. Regards to the brethren. Yours, my dear brother,

In truth and fidelity,

W. TAYLOR.

To the Rev. Mr. Gear.

(Extracted from the Gospel Messenger.)