

THE NIPISSINGS

COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

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Etienne Brule was, probably, the first man of alien race to appear in the land of the Nipissings. After him came the interpreter and dauntless woodwman, Jean Nicolet, and many devout Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries. In the Archaeological Report for the year 1913 there appeared a short sketch of the life of Brule. We deem it expedient to anticipate this article on the Nipissings by brief biographies of Nicolet and the first missionaries to the tribe.

JEAN NICOLET

Without contradiction Samuel Champlain was the most disinterested, loyal and seeing statesman France had commissioned to govern her possessions in North America. By his fidelity to treaties, his tact in dealing with the tribes, and his superb diplomacy he succeeded in winning the good opinion and friendship of all the sedentary and migratory Indians of New France.

As early as 1615 he had domiciled among the Algonquins and Hurons several promising young Frenchmen, who were instructed to learn the languages of the savages and to study their manners, customs, and ways of living. With the assistance of these youths, as interpreters and advisers, Champlain hoped to permanently control the Ottawa tribes, and, in time, unite the eastern and western nations into a great confederacy bound by self-interest and expediency to the banners of New France.

Moreover, his dream of finding a direct passage to the Indies and to the kingdom of China, the Cathay of early cartographers, was always with him. He had heard from his Algonquin allies of far western lands peopled by unknown hordes, and of inland lakes as yet unseen by any white man. Living and hunting with the Algonquins near the headwaters of the Ottawa was Jean Nicolet, a promising and intelligent young Frenchman, whom Champlain had, in 1620, committed

to the care of the chief of the Allumette Indians. Sending for Nicolet, Champlain commissioned him to undertake the discovery of the western sea and break a path to the regions of mystery. Nicolet was born in Cherbourg, Normandy, France and came to Canada in 1618. He was a young man of deep religious convictions, of unblemished character, and gifted with a retentive memory. Champlain, when he first met Nicolet in Quebec, was convinced that he was a young man of high courage, of a good heart and judgment, and of prudent conduct. Impressed by his sincerity and honesty, Champlain committed him to the care of the Algonquins of Isle des Allumettes, whom he first visited in 1613. With the, Nicolet remained two years, living their lives and accompanying them in their wanderings on land and water, feasting or starving as the fortune of the hunt determined. He had now acquired a mastery of the language of the tribe and was chosen to be one of a deputation sent to strike a peace with the Iroquois of western New York. Returning, he went to the Nipissings, whose hunting grounds lay in the forest around Lake Nipissing. Here he remained for nearly nine years as an adopted member of the tribe, having his own cabin, doing his own fishing, hunting and trading, and taking his seat in all the councils of the tribe. At last he returned to Quebec and again met Champlain, who commissioned him to explore the uncharted regions of the great west.

On July 1st, 1634, the Jesuit missionaries, Fathers Daniel, Davost and Brebeuf, left Quebec for the Huron country. With the flotilla went Nicolet, on his way to the Winnebagoes. Nicolet, leaving Brebeuf and his companions at Allumette Island, pushed on to the Huron villages on Georgian Bay and, with seven Hurons, started again on his adventurous expedition. From Vimot's "Relation" we learn that he followed the north channel of the Manitoulin till he landed at Sault Ste. Marie. Returning, he canoed the Detour Channel and, passing through the Strait of Michilimackinac, entered Lake Michigan. Skirting the western shore of the lake, he passed

over Green Bay, and, sailing up the Menominee River, he met and held council with the Menominees, called afterwards by the French "Les Folles Avoines," or eaters, of wild rice. Leaving these Indians he went up the Fox River and entered the tribal lands of the Winnebagoes. After arranging a peace with the tribe, distributing the receiving presents. Nicolet continued his journey on the Fox River, and, sailing across Lake Winnebago, arrived at the portage of the Wisconsin. Here he stood upon land, a mile and one-half wide, where the waters separated on their way to the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi Rivers. According to Nicolet, the Winnebagoes - a Dacotah people - were numerous and a sedentary nation, speaking a language radically unlike that of the Hurons Algonquins.

Returning by way of Mackinaw, he visited the Ottawas on Manitoulin Island, stayed for some days with the Georgian Bay Hurons, then, entering French River, he crossed Kake Nipissing and, sailing down the Mattawan, Ottawa and St. Lawrence arrived at Three Rivers and, triumphantly ended his wonderful explorations.

Soon after his return from his visit to "the people of the sea." Nicolet was appointed by Champlain, official interpreter and a member of the commissariat department. On October 7, 1637, he married Marguerite Couillard, a god-child of Champlain. From his residence at Quebec, he left, late in October, 1642, accompanied by M. de Savigny, to redeem an Iroquois prisoner whom the Algonquins were about to burn at the stake. Nearing Sillery, the canoe bearing Nicolet and Savigny was swamped in a fierce storm and Nicolet was drowned. Before sinking, the daring explorer cried out to his companion: "Savigny, save yourself, you can swim: I cannot. I am going to God. I recommend to your care, my wife and daughter."

Thus died Jean Nicolet, a man among the greatest of the great men of New France. He was a man of sensitive conscience, of high courage, and daring initiative. By him the door of the far west was opened, through which afterwards passed the devoted missionary, the daring fur-trader, and the reckless

voyageur. On his wonderful expedition he visited or learned of the existence of eighty-three tribes, the names of many of which are recorded by Father Vimot in his relation of 1640.** During his many years of intimate association with the Nipissings, he recorded in his journal copious notes on the customs, religious practices, and the domestic manners and ways of life of the tribe. This Journal he gave to Father Le Jeune, who writes: "I ha e his Memoirs written by himself when he dwelt with the Nipissings. These notes will some day be published." ...1636.

CLAUDE PIJART, S.J.

The missionary, Claude Pijart, was born in Paris, September 10, 1600, and on August 7, 1621, became a Jesuit novice. In July, 1637, he landed at Quebec and lived in the colony for three years, ministering to the soldiers and colonists, and acquiring a ready conversational knowledge of the Algonquin language. Arriving in the Huron country, he was sent, November, 1640, with Father Charles Raymbault, to open a mission among the Nipissings, An Algonquin tribe dwelling on the northern shore of the Lake Nipissing. The members of the tribe were, according to the Relation of 1641, accustomed to leave their own hunting grounds late in the autumn every year, and, with the permission of the Hurons, winter in Huron territory on lands east of what is now Cranberry Lake, Parry Sound district. Here the two missionaries passed the winter instructing the tribe, and on the approach of spring, 1641 they went with the Indians to their summer home at Lake Nipissing.

Father Raymbault, unequal from failing health to endure the hardships of the mission, returned to Quebec, where he died in the autumn of 1642, and was buied in the same tomb which contained the remains of the great Champlain. His place on the Nipissing mission was filled by Father Rene Menard.

It is impossible, without a feeling of deep sympathy and pity, to read the details of the daily life of these devote missionaries

with the Algonquin hordes. Separated by hundreds of miles from their priestly companions of Huronia, their mission presented more serious obstacles and demanded greater fortitude and self-effacement than did the evangelization of the sedentary tribes such as the Petuns, Hurons and Neutrals.

To nourish the hope of some day rescuing these savages from their appalling degradation, and lifting them into a plane of decency and clean living, these priests were forced to endure humiliations and indignities shocking to their civilized natures.

Their mission of duty and charity compelled them, under most trying conditions, to follow the Algonquins across lakes, rivers and forests, to ply the paddle, carry over the portages their baggage and canoe, sleep at times on the bare earth or on the rocks, support the horrors of famine, the smoke and vulgarities of the camp, to walk in the shadow of a menacing death, to endure patiently the heat of summer and the frosts of winter, and to submit with resignation to insults, persecution and sufferings worse than martyrdom unto blood.

Father Pijart remained nine years with the Nipissings, among whom his zeal was confronted with almost insurmountable opposition. When the Huron missions perished with the nation, the two missionaries returned to Quebec, where Pijart died, November, 1680. During his long and trying residence with the Nipissings, he redeemed many of them from savagery and gross superstition. His valuable notes and observations are incorporated into the "Jesuit Relations" for the Years 1641-42-43 and 1648.

RENE' MENARD, S.J.

Referring, in his "Histoire de la Nouvelle France," (vol. 1, p. 358) to this extraordinary missionary, Charlevoix writes: "Truly, among the early missionaries, there was not one, who had done greater things. Heaven had especially dowered him with a power of understanding the character and soul of the savages." And Rochemonteix (vol. 1, p. 429) supplements this

tribute to the great Jesuit traveller and historian by adding: "Father Rene ' Menard, whose reputation for holiness was firmly established among the French and the Indians, was a living example of supernatural devotion to duty."

Born at Paris, France, September 7, 1605, Rene Menard entered the Jesuit novitiate, November 1624, and, after a long course of studies, was ordained to the priesthood in 1638. He arrived in Canada, July 8, 1640, and, after acquiring some familiarity with the Algonquin language, accompanied Father Ragueneau on his mission to the Hurons. From the Huron Mission of St. Mary's Menard and Claude Pijart started to open a mission to the Nipissings, and after many tribals, hardships, and suffering, entered their tribal encampment on the northern shore of the Lake Nipssing. Here they established their headquarters, and founded the mission of the Holy Ghost. Leaving the Nipssings, after living two years with them, among the Algonquins dwelling on the nort shores of Lake Simcoe, the mission of St. Elizabeth. After the slaughter and dispersion of the Hurons (1649), he Left for three Rivers. From here he was sent to the Iroquois country, and established a mission among the Senecas. Returning to three Rivers, he departed, 1660, with an Ottawa flotilla, which had come from the far West, and was now returning, after bartering with the French several years' accumulation of furs. This flotilla, carrying three hundred warriors, was brought down by the French explorers and traders, Radisson and Groseillier.

Arriving, after months of great suffering and brutal treatment, at Keweena Bay, on the southern shore of Lake Superior, he established, October 15, 1660, the mission of Saint Theresa. He was now entering upon the fifty-sixty years of his age, and stood alone in the heart of the continent, with no companion of his own race within a thousand miles of him. While here, a deputation of Tionontates- a remnant of the Petun-Hurons - from the Headwaters of Black River, a tributary of the Mississippi, waited upon him, bearing an invitation to visit them.

Acceding to their request, the venerable priest bade good-bye to his converts and went out from his mission of Saint Theresa, never to return. He evidently had a presentiment of his approachin doom, for, the morning of his departure, he said to the Indians surrounding him: "Farewell, my dear children: I bid you a long farewell for this world, for you may never again see me. Still I pray that the divie mercy may unite us all in heaven" *Relation 1663

When the party reached the headwaters of the Wisconsin River, their supplies gave out, and the Hurons said they would hurry on alone, leaving Father Menard and a companion, to await their return with relief. After waiting for sixteen days, Menard and his friend embarked in a canoe and began the descent of the river. When they approached a dangerous rapid, the missionary, to lighten the canoe, landed with some packages, and tried to make his way overland re-embark at the foot of the rapids. He was never again seen. He no doubt lost his way in the woods, and probably died of starvation. He may have been murdered, for his way in the breviary, alter furniture, and soutane afterwards found in the possession of the Dacotahs.

THE NIPSSINGS

"A People without subordination, law, form of government, or system; gross in religious matters, shrewd and crafty for trade or profit, but very superstitious."

Le Clercq. "Etablissement de la Foy." Vol.1,p.110.

When Champlain, in 1613, ascended the Ottawa to Allumet Island, he was told by his Algonquin allies of a tribe of their nation, whose hunting grounds were around a lake west of the Algonquin River. The tribe was called Nipisinien or Little Water People. This is the first mention in Canadian history of the Nipiss ngs, or Nipisingues, as written by Frontenac.

Jean Nicolet, explorer and interpreter, on the advice of the Champlain, left the Algonquins of the Ottawa, and, in 1620, became an adopted member of the Nipissings, with whom he remained for nearly nine years. From his journal, the main

features of which are incorporated with the Jesuit Relations of 1640-3, and from information furnished to their religious superior by Fathers Claud Pijart, Charles Raymbault, and Rene Menard, we are in possession of some valuable and interesting details of this almost extinct tribe.

THE HUNTING GROUNDS

we have no reliable information of the exact boundaries of the lands claimed by the Nipissings. North of Lake Nipissings they hunted and fished over the present townships of Mulock and Merrick, and on lands touching the forests of the Temagamis and Temiscamings. Eastward and south-east, they roamed over Nipissing townships., the Algonquin Park region, and lands lying immediately to the north-west of the Ottawa River. To the south they claimed the northern townships of Parry Sound district, and, westward, their territory lay on both sides of the French River almost to the shores of the Georgian Bay. When Champlain paid his first visit to the Ottawa Algonquins, the Nipissing land was an immense and gloomy forest through which rivers, streams, and brooklets flowed; where muskegs, swails, and swamps abounded, and in which lakes and lekelets reposed in primitive isolation. Now, when our vast timber lands are being rapidly denuded of their wealth, it may have an educational value, for our foreign readers, to repeat the names of the trees constituting the forests of this wonderful Nipissing region, when Jean Nicolet, in 1620, visited the tribe. Fortunately much marketable timber yet remains standing.

VEGETATION OF THE LAND

It is impossible for one who has not roamed through the forests of the Huron and Ottawa territory as it was, say, sixty years ago, to reproduce, even in imagination, the variety, richness, and profusion of plant and tree life of this wonderful region. From the Ottawa River to the Georgian Bay, and from

Lake Nipissing to Lake Simcoe, the land gave birth to spruce, fir, and balsam, to hemlock, beech, aspens, white oak, white pine, red and black oak, maple, chestnut, black and white ash, elm basswood, sassafras, dogwood, black walnut, cherry, swamp oak, hard and soft maple, tamarack, cedar, willow, black and white thorn, crab-tree and wild plum; also shrubs and vines, among which were black and spotted alder, sumach, hazel, sloe, blackberry, dewberry, blueberry, gooseberry, brown and red raspberry, wild currant, whortleberry, chokeberry, blue grape, wild strawberry, and a marvellous wealth of lichens, ground planets, and tripe de roche.

ANIMALS LIFE

Innumerable animals roamed over and peopled this vast wilderness, among which were the lynx and the wild cats, foxes beavers, otters, porcupines, ground-hogs, squirrels, wolves, muskrats, bears, raccoons, moose** (Nicholas Perrot says, in his "Memoire," that in the winter of 1670-71, the Ottawas snared and arrowed two thousand four hundred moose on Manitoulin Island. What, then, must have been the numbers in the forests of the mainland,) martens, rabbits, skinks, flying-squirrels, minks, weasels, moles, and field mice. There were snakes, lizards, and frogs from many species and varieties. Add to these a countless number of birds, such as swans, brant and wild geese, cranes, teal, divers of many kinds, terns, bitterns, herons, woodcocks, sandpipers, plovers, snipe, partridges, wild pigeons, starling, eagles, turkeys, swallows, martins, ravens, crows, woodpeckers, hawks and other birds of prey; quails, blackbirds and ducks of at least twenty varieties, and an infinite number of small birds, which, with all bird life, winged for the south every autumn, and returned as summer was coming to the land.

The rivers and lakes teemed with fish, so that ever where, in the air, on the land, and in the water, there was superabundant life.

HUMAN LIFE.

The people who claimed dominion over a large area of this territory, and over its animals life, spoke the purest Algonquin,* and, with their immediate neighbours, the Achirigouans, were the descendant of the original stock of the Algonquin nation, which with the sioux and Huron-Iroquois, controlled the vast region extending from the Canadian Rockies to the Atlantic Ocean* (Charlevoix (Journal Historique, p.186) says the Nipissing alone represented the original type of the Algonquin stock and language.

THE TRIBE

When, in 1620, Nicolet became a member of the tribe, the Nipissings were hunters and fishers, and lived in scattered villages composed of bark cabins of primitive construction. In summer the young men and children went entirely unclothed, the married men wore only the brayers or breech-cloth, but the women were, as a rule, decently dressed. In winter they all clothed themselves with the furs of animals and wore shoes or moccasins of tanned leather. They were expert snowshoers, canoe and bow men, but we e, according to La Hontan, "very cowardly." The Jesuit missionaries, who, as early as 1640, knew them intimately, called them "devil worshippers," and Nicolet tells us they were confirmed sorcerers. Speculations, theories, examination, of early documents and investigations into all known sources of information, have failed to account for the origin of the Nipissings, or for the original cradle of the Algonquin Indians. We know nothing of their past; when they arrived in northern Ontario, and whence their forbear came, no reliable tradition informs us. All that we know of them we have learned from Jean Nicolet and from the letters of French Missionary priests, who lived with them, and endeavoured to lift them to a plane of Christian civilization. Contact with them in more recent times has taught us nothing. Their past is

impenetrable to the eye of historic research, and the origin of the tribe, like that of the Algonquin race, is veiled by the mists of a very remote past. Among the Nipissings there was no social organization, of system of government. The chiefs and old men of the tribe assembled together intermittently, and talked over matters affecting the interest. Each man's and women's liberty was absolute and inviolable. A Nipissing came as near as possible to Rousseau's perfect and "ideal man." He was untainted by civilization, did what he liked, was moved only by natural impulses, and if (according to the French deist, "l'homme qui réfléchit est un animal dépravé" - the man who meditates is a brute, ") the Nipissing was not a free and independent man, then there was no absolute freedom or independence on earth.

COMING OF THE MISSIONARIES

When the two Jesuit priests, Claude Pijart and Charles Raymbault, in 1640, came to the shores of Lake Nipissing and looked out upon its pleasant waters, a numerous band of Nipissings villaged on land lying between Trout Lake and Lake Nipissing. The habits traits of character, customs and manners of the Nipissings, with whom the early missionaries came into immediate contact, were those of all their Algonquin kinsmen, in their primitive state, from Isle des Allumettes on the Ottawa River to Sault Sainte Marie, Lake Superior, The Nipissings then dwelt in cabins of rude construction, and were grouped together in scattered villagess, or more often in scattered bourgs. These wretched squattings were but temporary abodes; for when conditions were favourable, or a contagious disease threatened the lives of the community, they burned their shacks and chose another site. Their miserable shelters were always temporary cabins, which were raised or taken down in a few hours.

In winter these bark huts were heated by a ground fire, the smoke of which escaped by an opening in the roof. At

times, when the winds were favourable, the smoke in the tent became so dense that the women and children were forced to lie low with their faces to the earth, breathing as best they could. Within these wretched cabins there were no separate rooms or divisions, no beds, no seats, no convenience of any kind save filthy mats, or the skins of animals captured in the chase.

They knew nothing of bread, salt, pepper, or condiments of any kind. Their half wild and mongrel dogs were tormented with fleas, and their own hair and bodies were infested with lice.

In the summer the young men, the boys and girls went entirely naked, the women were, as a rule, decently clad, but the full grown-men wore only the brayer or breech-cloth . In the winter they all wore furs and boots, or moccasins made of deer hide.

The care of the hut, the dressing of skins, the cutting and gathering of fire-wood, in fact, the drudgery of the camp among the Nipissings, as among all the Algonquin tribes, was the womens portion. She and her children gathered the nuts and wild berries, grubbed for the worms and field mice, and cooked the food. They fleshed and tanned the hides and made the clothes, cut and fibre-sewed the moccasins for the man and the family. Knowing nothing of pot or oven, she either dug a hole in the ground, which she plastered and fired, or found a hollow stump or log which served her for stove and fire-place. With stones heated in a fire she boiled the water in the hole or hollow block, and threw into it scraps of rabbit flesh, fish, fragments, of deer meat or bear flesh, and on this stew fed her husband and family.

The husband posed as a hunter and warrior, and his warrior's dignity would not permit him to stoop to menial work. His days were given to slothful ease, to gambling, gossiping with his neighbours, to fighting, hunting, fishing, or attending feasts, where he danced all night and devoured everything set before him.

When the weather was very cold and the winds piercing, he sat on a bearskin by the fire, fashioning bows and arrows, rat and rabbit sticks, chipping flint and arrow tips, and making traps and nets. He made his own canoes and paddles, his own snowshoes, and weapons, offensive, his spear and war club, his scalping knife of flint or bone, his stone pipes, and his amulets.

Though La Houtan regarded them as "very cowardly," The Nipissings had all the fighting instincts and courage of the Algonquin. If killed in battle, and his companions were unable to carry away his body, his scalp was torn from his head by the enemy, and his carcass left in the woods to be eaten by wolves.

When the tribe was at peace with those beyond its hunting grounds, the warrior, who was the most popular, and of good standing among his neighbours, was the man who did no harm to others, who lived peaceably with his neighbours, who gave and attended feasts, and took a prominent part in the tribal orgies and dancing festivals. These orgies were often boisterous carousals, when men and women young men and maidens abandoned themselves to nude dances and shameful impudicities.

RELIGION AND MORALS

The Nipissings knew nothing of moral or of moral law. The Nipissing boy or girl, before arriving at the age of reason, had lost even the adumbration, the instinct of morality. *(They become addicted to most shameful habit of life even before they are of sufficient age to know the same attached to it." (Letter of Gabriel Marest, in Lettres Edif.)

The unpartitioned tent, the promiscuous familiarity of sisters and brothers, of husband and wife, or wives, and the nakedness and libertinage of the young men, banished all reserve and feeling of shame in the child. If the natural or exceptional instincts of modesty induced a young girl to absent herself from the shameless feast or lascivious dance, she became a target for the jibes and taunts of her companions, and was forced by mocking laughter and ridicule

. Modesty in a wife or daughter was a contradiction and absurdity, opposed to the tradition and the practice of the race; and such was the fixity of tribal opinion that a maiden who aspired to purity or chastity was regarded by her companions as eccentric, or as a girl deranged. The Jesuit missionaries complained that, by reason of their hardness of heart and plurality of wives, it was almost impossible to Christianize them. *Lettre du P. Jerome Lalemant au Pere Provincial.)

The religion of the Nipissings, if we may use the word to express a tissue of ridiculous fables and puerile ceremonies, was a conglomerate of superstitious practices. They worshipped and made supplication to the sun and moon, accompanied with speeches, appeals and addresses. Among their divinities were included the "Great Hare" - primitive father of all Algonquins - and countless spirits or demons called Manitous. They peopled the entire universe with spirits, and believed that great storms, thunder, lightning and eclipses emanated from their manitous. They regarded the beaver, the rattlesnake, and the bear, as great divinities because of their supposed superior intelligence. At times they offered to the sun, to the moon and the stars, and to their manitous, gifts of tobacco, which they threw into the water or the fire to solicit their good will.

They believed the soul continues to live after leaving the body; that in the other world a spirit body would be given to the soul, which, with its new body, would enjoy all the pleasures of eating, dreaming, sleeping and companionship with its friends.

When a warrior died, all his hunting, war, and fishing gear, his tobacco pouch and pipe, were buried with him, for the Nipissing, like the Huron, believed all material things to be possessed of souls. If the warrior was popular Chief, a great fighter or hunter, his obsequies were celebrated with savage pomp and splendor. They clothed the body in costly furs, lavished on it strings of wampum, silver bracelets, and pendants for nose and ears. They painted the face of the dead man in

brilliant colours to conceal the pallid hue of death and to impart the countenance an air of life. A gorget hung from his neck and rested on his breast, his bow and quiver were by his left arm, his stone tomahawk in his belt, and his pipe was in his mouth. A kettle filled with provisions, a box of vermilion and presents from his friends were at hand to be buried with the warrior. Thus outfitted, the brave was sent on his long journey to the spirit world to meet the great chiefs of his nation who had preceded him, and were waiting to conduct him to the Happy Hunting Grounds of his dead kinsmen* Relation of Father Rouband, "Lettre Edifiantes des Missions Etrangers," and Relation, 1626.

When, in the summer of 1626, Father Charles Lalemant assisted at the burial of a Nipissing, who, with his band, had paid a visit to the Hurons, he asked a grizzled old warrior why interred with the dead man his weapons and other articles. "Why," answered the old man, "because the warrior will use them in the spirit world. It is true that the bodies of the pots, skins, knives, and weapons remain in the grave with the dead, but the souls of these things go with the soul of the dead man, and where ever he may be in the other world he makes use of them."

In the "Happy Hunting Grounds" beyond the grave were wild animals - spirit animals - which the departed Nipissing, if he were a good hunter, a brave and neighbourly man when on earth, hunted, with his spirit bow, arrows and knife. Life in the other world was socially bettered and made happier which they expected to see continued. An abundance of food and game, additional health of body and fleetness of limb, with no worry for the means of livelihood were the pleasures of this life intensified, and consisted chiefly in resembled the pagan Elysium, where "life is the easiest to man, and no snow is, nor storm nor rain," and the "Paradise of Mahomet," with temporal conditions made better, and earthly joys intensified and prolonged for ever. This heaven was placed beyond the southern horizon, where the climate was mild, the winds refreshing and game abundant. This was the land to which

the kindly neighbour, the good hunter, the brave warrior and the good man went after death. The cowardly, the selfish, and the evil man was interned in a land of perpetual snow, ice, and cold winds, where he shivered eternally and was always thirsty and half starved. When the soul of a man and a woman - but not the soul of a child - left its body it came back for a time from the spirit world, haunting the village and waiting for another soul to go with it in its return journey. Because of this belief, a Nipissing never, voluntarily, passed by a grave at night, or went around alone after dark if any one in the Village was seriously sick, for he feared to meet a ghost waiting for the sould of the dying man or woman.

Many of the men claimed to have met and spoken with the spirits of the dead , whom they unwillingly encountered, when compelled to be abroad on dark nights. Nothing, not even the hope of good luck in vattle or the chase, would tempt a Nipissing to enter a grave-yard on a dark night.

Every brave carried about his person his Wah-kon in a small bag. This Wah-kon was adopted by the young boy ripening into warrior manhood after a prolonged fast in some lonely retreat in the hills. It might be, according to his dreams, a little dried up bird, a weasel's skin, a feather, a small bone, the tooth or claw of an animal, or a curiously shaped little stone. Within it dwelt his protecting spirit - his own individual Manitou. This Wah-kon he carried with him everywhere, it never left his person. He guarded it as carefully as a miser his gold, addressed it in familiar terms, and appealed to it for help in every danger or emergency.

The Nipissing were distinguished among the Hurons and other neighbouring tribes by the number of men among them who professed to have power over spirits, and influence with Manitous. These men were the autmoins or shamans, and were feared and respected for their occult gifts. Because of the number of these shamans, who were given to jugglery, shamanistic practices, invocation of the dead, and the cult of spiritism, they were called devil-worshippers and sorcerers by the french and the Hurons. The members of the Nipissing

tribe were strongly attached to each other: they helped one another with generous liberality, and they were all on a common plane of equality. The children of a family were affectionate to their parents and to each other, and among the units of the tribe , there was an admirable solidarity,* Their intercourse with each other was always marked by respect and civility,* "Among them there is an affability and a courtesy almost incredible." Relation, 1636", but to their enemies they were ruthless in their savagery. Everything - hatred , lies, treason, revenge , robbery, merciless cruelty and defamation - was encouraged and practised to intensify hatred of their foes. SUCH WAS THE LAND, AND SUCH THE PEOPLE, THE Jesuit missionaries, in 1640, attempted to Christianize and civilize. That their courage and zeal repaed but a harvest of barren regrets was not due so much to the severity of the winters, the dense ignorance, of the roving habits of the tribe, as to the inveterate attachment of the Nipissings to phenomenon of human nature that it abhors a change from that to which it is accustomed and with which it is satisfied, to the relatively small number who will agree to change their institutions, laws and usages. Even to-day there are many civilized and partially civilized races which refuse to accept our Christianity or our civilization. The entire Mahommedan world detests our Christianity, and the negroes of equatorial Afica are opposed to our civilization. Our creed and our ways of living are disliked by all those who are, according to our thinking, barbarous or savage. The uncounted populations of China, Persia, Thibet, and Egypt, loathe and despise our civilization. There are few phenomena more remarkable than the stubborn incredulity and disdain with which a man belonging to cultivated Chinese society listens to the boasted superiority of our European civilization. His confidence in his state and superiority is solidly established against his experience of our military triumphs, and against our acknowledged scienctific inventions and discoveries, which overcame the exclusiveness and national pride of the wily Japanese, who refuse to accept our religion and our social code. There is today in Indian a

potential minority, trained in the councils of British professors and statesmen, many of them educated in English universities, and familiar with the literature of Europe, who will permit a finger to touch the very subjects with which European civilization and legislation is now concerned- social and religious customs and usage. There can be no controversy over the fact that the enormous mass of the Mahommedan and East Indian population hates and dreads any changes which would infringe upon its social life and religion.

By a universal law, man's evolution, while progressive, is very slow, and the religion, superstitions, and habits of a race change not with years but with centuries. An absolute intolerance of religious and political change characterises the largest part of the human race, and has marked the whole of it for the longest portion of its history. Even in regard to habits, mankind is very slow to change. The complete civilization of a race is always slow and insensible in its progress.

FATE OF THE NIPISSINGS

Although the Nipissings had, until their dispersion, a few permanent villages, they were at no time a sedentary people. In early times they traded with the Crees of the West, and with tribes of the Hudson Bay regions, and were always close bargainers. Many of them, with the permission of the Hurons, passed the autumns in Huron territory, fishing, picking berries and purchasing corn for the winter.

When driven from their lands in 1650, through fear of the Iroquois, many of them fled towards Hudson Bay, and others withdrew to Lake Nipigon, north-west of Lake Superior.*

At Nipigon they were visited and instructed in Christian doctrine by the venerable missionary, Claude Allouez.

In 1671, a number of the tribe returned to their old grounds around Lake Nipissing. In 1680, Father Henry Nouvel, S.J. , visited four bands of the Nipissing, who, with another Algonquin family, the Achingouans, were celebrating at

Maskounagoung - north of Lake Superior - the decennial Feast of the Dead.

The dismemberment of the tribe practically began in 1650, for we find, as recorded in the Jesuit Relations and other early writings, families of Nipissings at the mission of St. Ignace, Missilimackinac (RE. 1677), Bout de l' Isle (Montreal Island) 1689, at Three Rivers, and at the Lake of the two Mountains, near Montreal. When, in 1756, Montcalm organized his expedition against Fort Edward, he had with him one thousand Indians drawn from thirty-six nations, including eighty Nipissings who had "made the prayer." **When a pagan Indian became a Christian he was said to have embraced or made the Prayer. During the 17th and early 18th centuries, Christianity among all the savages was known by the name of Prayer. If the Prayer had tolerated polygamy, there would have been less difficulty in converting the tribes. See Relation of Father Sebastian Rasle in "Lettres Edifiantes.") They were then called Nipistungues.

With time many of the Nipissings drifted back to their old homes on the northern shores of Lake Nipissing, where they are settled on a reservation and classified officially as Chippewas. But they are not members of the Chippewas group, which is made up of Ottawas, Chippewas, and Mississaugas. They belong to an Algonquin classification, which includes Abitibi, Temiskamingues, Nipissings, and Tamagamis. Chauvignerie says their totems are the Heron, Beaver, Birchbark, and Blood.

The Nipissings on the reservation number, according to the last census of 1910, 226 souls. Not many of these are pure-blooded Indians. Most of the Indians in our Province are now half-breeds, or three-quarters blood, and, in all probability, the pure Indians, in a hundred years, will die out, as did the last of the Hurons in Quebec province a few years ago.