

A RED-INDIAN LEGEND

BY REV. H. S. FAGAN

THERE is no lack of famous English missionaries—men who, like Bishop Mackenzie and Dr. Livingstone, have stamped their names upon a continent; men who have been civilisers as well as preachers. But other nations and other churches have their missionaries too, sometimes in places where there are no English to compete with them. Ever since the French began to colonise Canada, there has been a constant stream of priests towards the far north. Frenchmen had lived and died among the savages of the Red River and the Athabasca, long before we had thought of sending out a bishop to Rupert's Land. They are still at work through all the country from Lake Winnipeg to the mouth of the Mackenzie; but, as in missions elsewhere, men for the work are harder to get hold of than money. With Frenchmen the favourite quarter just now for missionary efforts is the far East. Young men want to get out to China or Japan. There's a chance of being martyred in those civilised countries; and the recent canonisation of ever so many Japanese martyrs has given an impulse in this direction. So, at least, says M. Fernand Michel, who, in his "*Eighteen Years among the Red Indians*," being the life of Mgr. Faraud, Vicar Apostolic of the Mackenzie," has given us a most interesting book on a subject which is too often treated in a peculiarly uninteresting style. There are none of the conventionalities of religious biography in M. Michel's work. He lets the good bishop tell his own story,—how, when he first settles down near Lake Bonnet, he rings his bell but nobody comes, and so he has Mass all to himself. Next Sunday in walk an old man and an old woman and six children. To them he preaches; but finds out after service, much to his disgust, that the man is deaf and the woman blind. All the tribe are out at a grand sacrifice; so he goes after them, and attacks the chief, who replies: "I'm busy with my great medicine; but I told my young people to go to your chapel." He then threatens that if they won't come properly to service, he will break up the mission and go away. "O, don't do that," says the chief; "if you went away, there would be nobody to give us any more tobacco."

This is enough to show us that Bishop Faraud's savages are by no means models of perfection. The principle of selection is in full force among them. Woe betide the old and the weakly in communities where the struggle for life is continual. They have a trick, too, of eating their sons and daughters, by way of diminishing the number of mouths to be supported. "How are those two children I baptised last

summer?" asks the bishop of one of his Creek-Indian converts. The man hums and haws, and tries to put the question aside; but at last he is forced to confess, "We had a shockingly hard time of it in the winter. Our poor children had got very thin; they were in pain: so we took pity on them. They could not have lived long, you know."

Hospitality and gratitude are rare virtues in those high latitudes. The noble savage, who shares his last bone with the stranger who has wandered to his wigwam, does not seem to be so common in real life as he is in Fenimore Cooper's novels. Mgr. Faraud once goes through thirty leagues of snow-covered forest to visit a sick man who had sent for him. He starts in a hurry, without taking much food. He and his guide get into the hut half-dead with fatigue; and prayers are begun forthwith, to the great delight of the sick man, who brightens up at once, but never thinks of offering them any refreshment. At last they have to ask for something to eat. "Really," says the savage, "I've nothing but a very little fish and meat, and I want both of them for myself." "Give us a few dried fish, then," says the bishop. "I'll lend them to you, father; but you must be sure to give them back when I come round to you in the spring."

A missionary (we must remember) is always tempted to depreciate the natives among whom he works; their being in a bad state is to some extent his warrant for labouring to convert them. Were it not true that "manners they have none, and their customs are beastly," there would be less reason for Societies to take them in hand. Even Mgr. Faraud allows his Red Indians some good points. When a man goes out hunting for his family, he will bear the most terrible hardships rather than come back empty-handed. Custom does not allow him to take any food with him; and so he is often out four or five days without tasting any thing. They are clever conjurors too, these savages. A medicine-man will let himself be tied up, arms and legs, with small cords, in any manner and by anybody you please, and in two or three minutes he will have undone all the knots, without the need of any dark cupboard.

Some of their legends, again, are very beautiful. Mgr. Faraud gives us several, one or two of which seem as if he must have unconsciously thrown in a spice of Christian thought in translating them. The following, however, has about it a savour of thorough originality:

Once upon a time, in Beaver-land, there dwelt an old man, Eltchellekoyé by name, along with his two grandsons, who had the same name, with the addition respectively of Onié and Oniym. And one day the old man said to them: "My children, I am getting old; I shall soon have gone away into the land of spirits, and the land we dwell in has grown bad, for the Good Spirit has deserted it, and almost all wild creatures have gone from it. You will die of hunger when I am gone, unless you do what I bid you." They listened in silence like good boys, determined to do what their grandfather ordered. "Mind you always

keep your word," said the old man, "wherever you are; and now go and get a canoe and set off hunting; but never come back here any more." "O, don't drive us off, grandfather." "I have said you must go, my children." "But whither?" "The Good Spirit only knows. He has a land prepared for those who obey him. So mind you do whatever he orders." "But why, grandfather?" "You must never ask 'why,' my children."

So they set off with their bows and arrows; and after three days' journeying, they caught two little bustards, and tied them up ready for killing next day; and then they lay down and slept in the canoe. And while they slept, a voice said to them, "Harness the bustards to your canoe." They did so; and for three days they were drawn on with wonderful speed, until they came to a vast lake, of which they could not see the further shore. "Alas, we shall never see land again!" said they. "Surely it was the bad spirit who bade us harness the bustards."

Just then they came in sight of the shore; but it was all white sand, without a tree or a blade of grass. "Here we shall die of hunger," said they. So they cried themselves to sleep. "Brother," said Onié, when they woke, "a voice came to me, saying, 'Eat the bustards.'" And as he was speaking, the birds came and nestled down by the boys; and, lo, they had grown to their full size, and were covered with fine feathers. So they killed them, and eat one and put the other by, and lay down again to sleep. And the voice came once more, and said, "Burn the canoe, and warm yourselves, and then journey onward." So they made a fire and cooked the other bustard, and then walked on, till they came upon huge footprints, as it were of giants, with great long heels. And while they doubted what this should mean, they saw a big wigwam, in front of which the giant's children were at play. "Mother," cried they, "look what funny little men we have found." So the mother of the giants came out, and kindly invited them to come in and rest. The father-giant was out fishing; but he soon came back, —a bearded man, three times as high as other men; and when he heard his children laughing at the "little mites of men," he reproved them, saying, "Have I not often told you that from the land of the sunrise should come little white men, whom also the Great Spirit protects, and who shall found a new nation?" So he fed the brothers many days, till at last he said, "It is time for you to go whither the Spirit will lead you." "And how shall we know the way?" asked the boys. Then the giant lifted one up in each hand, and held them aloft, and said, "You see where the sun sets? there is your promised land." He gave them also a pie made of dried fish and fat, and to each a bow and arrows. "Never eat all your pie," said he, "at one sitting; and if an arrow goes astray, be sure not to search for it." "Why not?" said the boys. "You must never ask 'why,'" replied the giant.

So they go on their way right merrily. The pie always grows whole again by next day, and the arrows that are lost come back under their

pillows. At last they get among a number of partridges, and begin to shoot at them for fun ; but soon Oniyim's arrow catches in a tree just above their heads. "Brother, you're taller than I am; just reach me down my arrow," says Oniyim. But Onié cannot knock it down with his bow; and when he stands on his brother's knee, and even on his shoulder, the arrow always sways a very little out of reach. At last he gets angry, and makes a spring at it; and straightway the arrow fastens itself to his hand and carries him off through the sky. Poor Oniyim is terribly grieved to see his brother taken away. He lies down beside a tree, and says, "Never will I taste food again. It is my fault that my brother is lost." At last he falls asleep, and sees a big bird, thrice as big as a canoe, settle down beside him. "Now," thinks he, "I am going to be eaten, and I deserve it." But the bird is the Great Spirit, who cheers him on, and bids him be more obedient, and march on still towards the sun-setting. Meanwhile, after a long, long flight, his brother drops to the ground, and finds himself in the midst of winter, with snow-mountains all round him. He falls asleep; and, awaking, sees a pair of snow-shoes by his side. They are too big; so, after vain attempts to fit them on, he falls asleep again; wakes again, and finds them altered to his size, but thongless; sleeps the third time, and at his third waking finds them quite ready to put on. "He who watches over me will guard my brother also," is the thought with which he comforts himself. At last he gets to a hut where dwell an old woman and her two daughters. "'Tis he," says the mother, as soon as she sees Onié; but, hiding her surprise, she bids him lie down and rest on some branches; and while he is asleep she blacks his face, "for I don't wish my girls to fall in love with him yet," says she. When Weasel-catcher and Mouse-catcher (for so were her daughters named) came back and saw his black face, they burst out laughing and said, "Mother, what strange beast is that you've got here?" "That strange beast, as you call him, is the elect of the Great Spirit; and you will love him as a brother." "No, we sha'n't have such bad taste, mamma." So they go out to play; and the mother washes Onié's face, dresses his hair, wakes him, and tells him: "I have two daughters; they will both want to marry you; but you must not have either of them yet. Love them as sisters; and be sure never to look at them while they are asleep." "Why?" asks Onié. "Never ask 'why,' young man," replies the mother. The girls peep in through the leather curtain to have a look at their mother's monster; but he is a monster no longer. Instead of laughing, they both cry out, "I shall have him," and rush into the hut. "No, no," says Onié, "be my sisters, both of you; and I will be your brother." Many days he lives with them in the hut, hunting and bringing home daily good store of moose or elk or white partridge. But he is not happy. He cannot help thinking of his brother. The old woman is very good to him; she shows him over the mountains the great lake, beyond which is the happy land reserved by the Great Spirit for them

that obey him. She tells him on which side of the snow-hills he must always be sure to keep when he is out hunting; and when he asks "Why?" she stops him with the usual "Don't ask why." But one night he can't sleep for thinking of the lost Oniym. So after lying a long time he calls out, "Sisters, are you asleep?" No answer. At last he gets up and walks about, and just then the moon shines in and shows him the two girls in the far corner of the hut. But no sooner has he looked than the frozen snow gives way, and he falls down, down, through the floor of the hut. He is lying in a hole among the snow, right on the other side of the mountain, mourning over his second disobedience, and expecting to die of hunger, when he hears a gruff voice cry, "I smell man's flesh." "How can we dig him out?" replies a still gruffer voice. "Go and get me the bear's claws we saw by the roadside, and I'll dig." The claws are brought; but just as Onié is dragged to the surface, they break, and he falls back again. "Go and get me that big thigh-bone we saw under the tall trees," says the gruff voice. Meanwhile Weasel-catcher and her mother and sister are searching, disconsolate, up and down over the snow-covered hills, when suddenly they come on a hideous monster with only one leg, one arm, and one eye, and a mouth six times as big as other peoples'. He holds a big thigh-bone in his hand; but the three women, though terribly frightened, pluck up courage to ask if he has seen their friend. The monster grins horribly, and roars out, "Come along to my master." So they go on, emboldened by their love for Onié. But the second monster, more hideous than the first, the moment he sees them cries with a voice that makes the trees shake, "There's nice meat." "Yes, very nice meat," replies the serving-monster. "Hold your tongue; it's not meat for you," answers his master. In an agony of fear the two girls fall down at the monster's knees, crying, "O, don't eat us; we're looking for our brother." "Wow, wow; I'm very hungry, and I've got your brother in this hole." "Don't eat him, dear monster," say they, clinging to his legs. "Yes I will, unless one of you will marry me," hissed the monster, glowering on them with his one round eye. The two sisters looked at one another; and the monster began digging, and soon dragged poor Onié out. "Wow, wow! there's nice meat on him," he roared. "Yes; nice meat on him," chorussed the servant. "Hold your tongue; he's meat for your master," replied the other, and began sharpening his knife. "Spare him, spare him. We'll marry you," cried the girls both at once. "No; I'm hungry, and I mean to eat him first." Just then was heard a mighty rushing of wings; and the two monsters fell down as if struck with lightning. But Otelballé the Good Spirit, for it was he, seized one in each of his talons and flew off. Just then a vulture darted by, pursuing a humming-bird. "Quick, quick, girls; kill the vulture," says the mother. Mouse-catcher shoots it; and the poor little humming-bird falls chilled and terrified into her bosom. They soon light a fire, warm the bird, and then, with solemn words of prayer, let it go

as an offering to the Good Spirit. "Little bird, go tell the Good Spirit to bring my brother to me," adds Onié to the form of prayer.

On, on, over the snowy hills; till at last they find a hut in which a little child is lying asleep on a deer's skin. "Little child, where are your parents?" asks the old woman. "There," said the child, which had woke at the sound of her voice; and he pointed eastward, falling asleep the moment he had done speaking. "Little sleeping child, where is my promised land?" asked Onié. "There," said the child, pointing westward, and straightway fell asleep again. By and by they meet an old man with a bow and arrows. He gives Onié two arrows, —a male arrow for shooting the buck, a female one for shooting the doe; "but take care the girls never get hold of the arrows," adds he. "Why?" asks Onié. "Never ask why, my son." Alas, thought Onié, how constantly I keep forgetting my grandfather's injunctions! So they marched on and on, building a snow-hut every night, till early one morning Weasel-catcher said, "How lovely is this land! Look at the flocks of white partridges, and the sun glinting on the frozen snow. Why should we be always moving on?" "Sister," said the other girl, "how often our mother has told us we must never ask why!" Just then two deer showed themselves on a little knoll hard by. The girls, used to hunting all their lives, feel their fingers itch to have a shot at them. "Onié's asleep; why not take his arrows?" But, alas, the moment they touch them the earth opens and they both sink down into a huge cave, where they are seized by the Good Spirit, and whirled off to the sand-desert, where dwell the man-loving giants. Outside the big wigwam they see the children at play, and are taken in to the mother-giant, who receives them kindly, and seems to know all about them. "Daughters," says she, "you have been punished for your disobedience; but the Good Spirit has forgiven you. Come and eat." Meanwhile Onié is heartbroken at the loss of his sisters. The mother comforts him, and tells him she is dying, and that the rest will all meet soon in the promised land. He believes her, because truth is in the mouths of the dying. "Hope on," says she. "You shall marry Weasel-catcher, and your brother shall marry her sister." And so saying, she dies; and Onié dutifully wraps her up in plantain-leaves, and sets her high up in a tree, and then lies down to sleep at its foot. Scarcely has he closed his eyes when, with a great rushing of wings, down swoops the Good Spirit's son and comforts him in his sorrow, telling him he shall surely come to a good land, where is plenty of winter-snow and summer-shade, and rivers full of fish, and moose and deer and musk-ox, and also many beavers. "But have a care," said he, "never to hunt the beaver after sun-down, and never to go out of the wigwam at night." "Why?" "Don't ask why," replied the son of Otelballé. Onié promises obedience; and is carried through the air and under the earth to a new land, where the big bird leaves him, bidding him push on westward, even to the great lake, and giving him

a little billet of wood which he is to throw thereon, and wait to see what will happen. This time Onié does not ask 'why,' but marches on, and at last, on the border of the lake, meets his brother, who has been quietly moving westward, living on the good giant's pie, and always keeping a bit for to-morrow. When their first joy at meeting again is over, Oniym says, "Eat, brother." "Nay, first," replies Onié, "I must do what the Spirit ordered." So he throws the billet into the water, and it turns at once into a fine canoe.

But what had become of the sisters all this time? They lived many days among the good giants; but they were very sad always. And at last the father-giant calls them aside one day, and says, "Little folks, it is time to go whither the Spirit calls you." Thereupon he lifts them up in his hands and shows them the path of the setting sun, which they are to follow. "And shall we see our mother?" "She is dead; but see you that white swan flying overhead? That is her spirit." So they march forward, the swan flying before them, till after many days they see the sun set in the great lake. Very soon they come in sight of the two brothers; and while Onié rushes joyously to meet them, Oniym stands weeping on the sand. He is soon comforted; and whilst they are sitting together, the swan comes up, and the humming-bird alights at their feet, and the Great Spirit birds, father and son, hover in mid air and shield the sun from them. "Let us be going," say they with one accord, and as soon as they have embarked, the canoe makes way of itself; the swan swims in front of them; and on the fifth morning they reach the land of promise. "We thank thee, O Spirit," they all cry out, lifting their hands to heaven; and stepping on shore, they are aware of a venerable old man followed by a youth, each carrying a bow and arrows. "Who am I?" asked the old man. "You gave me the male and female arrows," says Onié. "True: and this is my son, the babe you found asleep in the wigwam." "Why has he grown so fast?" asks the forgetful Onié. "Young man, you must never ask why." Then the old hunter tells them the story of their birth: "You, Eltchellekouyé Onié and your brother, are the sole survivors of a mighty nation which lived toward the sun-rising, hunting by day and resting by night, and living in plenty, because they were obedient to the Good Spirit. But by and by the evil spirit came among them; they took to going out of nights, and soon began to fight and destroy one another. So the Good Spirit left them, and the beasts ceased out of the land, and they took to slaying and eating one another; all but one family, who kept to the good old ways. Those also, nevertheless, the famine laid hold on; and the father and mother died; and you two and your grandfather were left. And the Good Spirit said to him in a dream, 'Arise, and go away from this evil nation, for I will make of thy posterity a nation which shall honour me. Onié and Oniym, you know the rest. And as for you, Weasel-catcher, you and your

sister are all that is left of another great and powerful nation, which dwelt close to the land of ice, where live the one-eyed monsters who devour men. Long time the Good Spirit protected the nation of your fathers, and hid them from the monsters. But at last he gave them up by reason of their disobedience. So all perished except one woman and her two daughters, which were preserved because they only had kept the right way. Know you, my children, who was that old woman? And now, ye four shall establish a nation which shall be faithful, for whom also this good land has been reserved from of old. Therefore, every morning before you go out hunting or fishing, take care to offer the first whiff of your pipe to the Good Spirit; and when you come home, burn in his honour the purest of the fat of the beasts which you have killed." As the old man spoke, his face grew wonderful to look upon, and there was as it were a glory round his head. "Teach these things," said he, "to your children and to your children's children. And now, Onié, take thy wife and build thy hut on this side of the forest; and thou, Oniym, go with thy wife to the other side. Begone, and hunt." Having so spoken, the old man vanished, and his son likewise; and the swan flapped her wings, uttered a joyous cry, and flew away.

Such is one of Father Faraud's Indian legends; and, simple as it is, it makes us wish that our missionaries would more frequently indulge us with similar means of judging of the aborigines among whom they labour. Why should Missionary Societies' reports, which a little care might make much more interesting than most books of travels, be in general the dullest of all dull publications? Do English people care so very much to see how much was collected by the Misses Neate, or what was the amount of the offertory at Slocombe, or the total gathered in the archdeaconry of Muttyn, that all that is left of the Report, after printing a dry sermon, full of the eternal commonplaces, is to be taken up with subscription-lists? I for one would much rather give my money to support a man who shows that he is a bit of an antiquary, perhaps a comparative philologist in a mild way, than one whose views are limited to the burning of idols and stopping dances and all other native ceremonies. I shall never forget the horrid scripture-reader whom I once met beyond Kenmare, and who, pointing out to me a holy well, said, "There used to be a little cross there, and the silly people actually believed that it had something to do with the goodness of the water; so one night I came and carried it off, and they have never found out to this day who did it." Destructive missionaries I look on as probably in many cases worse than no missionaries at all. Now, clearly, Bishop Faraud is not one of the destructives. He is stern enough in what he takes to be essentials; giving now and then, as in duty bound, a rap at the English, his rivals, who, he says, are kept by their *morgue insulaire* from really getting at the natives, and who yet don't a bit mind admitting to communion a chief with half a

dozen wives. The Romanist missionary is specially bitter against these anticipators of Colenso: what becomes of the wives whom he obliges his converts to give up he does not say. But, professional jealousy apart, he likes us very well indeed; for the English as a nation he has a good word in almost every chapter. The Hudson's Bay Company help him in his wanderings; indeed he would several times have perished but for timely food and rest at one or other of their forts: for the good father has a trick of starting late on his visitations; and winter comes on suddenly in those quarters—lovely weather breaking up in a day, and giving place to deluges of rain, followed by piercing cold and deep snow. But he has a stout heart; and keeps a cheerful face amid circumstances which might well excuse a man for looking somewhat downcast. “Le missionnaire ne meurt pas” is his talisman for rousing his comrades when, worn-out with work and exposure, they are giving way to despair.

The history of his wanderings is very interesting—just as interesting in its way as the notices which he has collected of the Indian legends, and which in the hands of some one like Dr. Dasent might be made to prove any amount of foregone conclusions about the transmission of the myth. Hiawatha had prepared us for a legend-loving race; the legends in M. Michel's volume makes us feel something like love for the race which could invent them. In fact the whole book is as pleasant reading as one could have for improving one's French. What a happy change there is, by the way, in this respect! Years ago, when “we” were beginning French, there was no choice between *Charles the Twelfth*, or *Télémaque*, or *Numa Pompilius*, or some such miracle of dulness, and what Browning calls “your crapulous French novel, on gray paper with blurred type.” Now there are scores of really interesting books, which young people will like to read, and which they need not thrust under the sofa-cushion when anybody is coming. Look at that *Bibliothèque Rose*, to which the Countess de Ségur contributes her lively stories. Read *Jean qui grogne et Jean qui rit*, or the *Mémoires d'une Caniche*; read Macé's *Bouchée de Pain et les Serviteurs de l'Estomac*, and confess that we are better off than our fathers—in our appliances for learning our neighbours' tongue at any rate. But has the *Bibliothèque Rose* made its way yet into our boys' and girls' schools? Alas, there the old “classics” hold their own, as soon as the unhappy learner has got through some *recueil* of more or less disconnected *morceaux*. No doubt a good teacher can do a great deal with bad tools; and a boy or girl who really wants to learn French will learn it even from Massillon's sermons. But good teachers and young persons who want to learn French as fast as they can are both rare. The thing, then, is to secure books which will interest those who read, and which will supply such a store of new words and phrases that the worst teacher shall not be able to hinder progress. French should not exactly be looked on as we are

so constantly told Latin ought to be — as a means to an end. It is in itself quite a sufficient end; and a practical knowledge of it is much more likely to be obtained by reading works the matter of which is interesting, than by confining the learner to a class of books which he will forget as soon as he has finished them. Too many of us are beginning to know a little about French; too few have any thing like a thorough knowledge of it—such a knowledge as “the” Lord Chesterfield had, for instance, or the Duke of Beaufort showed the other day, when he returned thanks at the Jockey Club dinner. It’s all very fine to talk of the pleasure of appreciating a foreign literature. You can read most French prose of any value in very passable translations; and it requires a long apprenticeship to realise anything like beauty in French poetry. What those of us who want French at all want it for is chiefly for practical uses. “The man who can speak both is as good as two men,” said the wonderfully civil Cherbourg banker who lionised us all over his town when he found, by our coming in to get a sovereign’s worth of francs, we were strangers. Yet even he was far from having mastered the idiom of the English, which he was so proud to display. “Expect, gentlemen, till I shall descend,” said he, as he left us to run up *au troisième* and (for our sakes) hold parley with a clerk at the Admiralty. Still his English was practical. He could have made his way even in a day’s shopping. How had he learnt it? He had picked out the English books that he thought would please him best, and made his teacher work them through with him. And among books likely to please and safely commendable I rank this life of Mgr. Faraud, of which you have been reading a sample. Read it, and you will both improve your French and also exalt your idea of human nature. For if ever there was a devoted and zealous and humble-minded missionary, this Romanist bishop *in partibus* is surely one.