BISHOP RECOUNTS PERILS IN FROZEN NORTH

BISHOP PETER TRIMBLE ROWE.

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THEY know him well, the good bishop, from the southern coast to Bering Sea and north across the Yukon to the Eskimo villages.

Ask anywhere from Skagway to Nome, in mining camp or Indian village, at settler's cabin or remote roadhouse, if they know the name of Peter Trimble Rowe, missionary bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and he will smile at so absurd a question.

Perhaps, if you have put your query to one of the older settlers, he will tell you to look across the snowy wastes or up the mountains to the trail over which you have just come, where the way has been beaten between straight black spruces, and will dismiss your question with the explanation:—

"He made that trail before the gold finds. He tramped across here all alone before any other white man ever came this way."

They would make an extraordinary assembly, those men to whom during his eighteen years as a missionary in Alaska Bishop Rowe has pointed out the better way: hostile Indians, savage and vindictive, bent upon the extermination of the invading white man, wild miners, squandering in gambling den and dance hall the gold they had wrung from the land by the hardest of hard labor; gamblers seeking their victims in the towns with their lieutenants scattered through all the camps; peaceful natives, childlike in their simplicity; settlers from every country and of all creeds. These were his children. To these he has ministered with tolerance and understanding and with a sturdy disregard for his own safety and comfort that has won him the admiration of rough men who themselves do not seem to know the meaning of fear.

Of all the churchmen who were in New York for the triennial General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church there are none whose labors in the cause of religion have been discharged in circumstances of greater danger or hardship than those of Bishop Rowe. Being a bishop in Alaska, with territory one-fifth as large as the entire United States to cover, is a decidedly adventurous business. And yet more than once Bishop Rowe has been offered an easier post to fill, in a more settled country, but he has always elected to remain the Missionary Bishop of Alaska. Through wild ways Alaska has come to comparative peace and order, and much of the better condition of things which prevails there to-day is traceable to the labors of the Bishop and his helpers. In every district of Alaska, save the Aleutian Islands, there is now a missionary station, and as an indication of the highly civilized conditions of the present day Bishop Rowe will tell you that when he makes his round to the mission stations nowadays there are almost always trails ready made on which to travel with his dogs and sleds, and it is a rarity rather than otherwise to be forced to make a night camp in the snow because there is no cabin in which one may take shelter.

Bishop Rowe has a kind, plain, everyday sort of manner, a democratic simplicity of address. It is characteristic of him that when the interviewer called at the house in which he is staying while in New York the Bishop himself opened the door.

"The servant did not come at once," he explained, "and I heard the ring, so I came."

One might travel far to see a more sturdy man than the Alaskan Bishop. His black eyes sparkle with youthful spirit. There is very little gray in his black hair and his skin is deep bronze in color as a result of his many winters of exposure. He is a strong man now and he has been used to travel over the snow greater distances in a day than even the Indians.

"A white man can, you know," says the Bishop, with a little pardonable pride of race. "Give us the same training and we can beat them at their own game."

In his initial labors, before he used dogs to carry his provisions, the Bishop and his fellow explorer of the wilds dragged all their outfit and provisions upon sleds. These were attached to rope harness worn over the shoulders.

"It was pretty hard," acknowledged the Bishop. "Yes, it was hard work; we pulled 450 pounds on those sleds. I came in time to feel that I could pull with any horse."

"During the first two years that I worked in Alaska things were entirely different from the present," said the Bishop; "that was before the Klondike was discovered. Then we had no roads, no trails, nor any convenient stopping places for the night. We had to make our own trails. Some of the trails now existing are those that I made when I first went into that country. Sometimes I went alone upon my trips until my friends and even the Indians remonstrated. They said:—

"'Suppose you go lame, something happen, then nothing save you.'

"I had to admit it was true. Nothing could have saved me, off in those wastes. So after a while I gave my promise that I would never go alone again.

"When I take a companion it is usually an Indian or an Eskimo. We take provisions, of course, some means of making shelter, and snowshoes for different conditions of snow. We use snowshoes as long as ourselves when the snow is soft, and when it is harder, so that there is no dang of our crashing through the crust, smaller shoes are used. One of the tricks which it was necessary to learn was how to put the snowshoes on and off without touching them with the hands. If the hands are used to adjust them the fingers would freeze. The amount of space that can be covered on the snowshoes varies tremendously. My rate varied from two to fifty miles a day. I have made fifty miles when I was travelling with the dogs. Of course, with the sled to haul it was a different matter.

"One of the hardest things about taking the trail in the winter is the necessity of keeping an eye open for fuel. Often after you are tired enough to drop you must keep on for hours until you find a spot where there is fuel. It is necessary to carry fuel along the Arctic coast, and blubber and oil are taken. On other trails we are sure to find fuel if we are patient in the search.

"It was often hundreds of miles between the human habitations when we first started to take the trail. In my first trip I started from the southern coast and went north 500 miles. The coast Indians gave us trouble. They had seen white men before, but they didn't want us to go into the interior, because they wanted all the country for themselves. No white man had gone into the interior before. But we got away from them and travelled for hundreds of miles until we came to a settlement of Stick Indians. They also were hostile. They wanted our food and would have killed us for it as they did some white men who came later.

"The only way to stave off death at their hands was to pretend that I was a shaman, or medicine man. My fellow traveller, who was at that time a white man, assumed the role of chief worshipper and made his devotions so publicly and so obsequiously that the Sticks were impressed. They watched us all the time, so that we could not get away, but they did not kill us. I held services and taught them hymns and prayers, and this also impressed them. Still we were always under surveillance. We would never have gotten away if we had had to depend on pulling our sleds. Fortunately, however, we struck the Sticks in the summer time. As soon as the spring broke we had gone into camp and built a boat. We cut the trees and made an excellent boat, which was not at all an easy task, as it was necessary to use the most primitive methods of building from the felled trees. The ice was not broken when we finished our boat, and so we put that also on our sleds and dragged it over the snow.

"When we came to open water we paddled, and when the ice closed in we dragged our boat out again and sledded. It was bitter work, and when night came we were always too tired to do anything but crawl into our sleeping bags.

"But it was the boat that saved us at last in connection with the supposition that we were supernatural. One day when we had decided we must go from the camp we slipped our boat into the water on a tributary of the Yukon and got into it. My companion made ready to paddle off and I stood with my knife in one hand and my gun in the other. The Sticks saw us, and they had rifles which they had gotten from the Hudson Bay Company—the very long ones which the company used to have made on purpose so that the pile of furs, which must be heaped as high as the gun in order to be considered an equivalent, should be as large as possible.

"For a moment it was a question of whether we should be forced to give up our lives or not. But the Sticks were not decided on killing us. Besides I was covering them with my rifle. I cut the rope that tied our boat, called a goodby in Chinook, and we glided away from them, leaving them half hostile, half friendly and altogether puzzled. Afterward the Indians killed numbers of white men who took that trail. The Canadian government hanged a few of them as a lesson, and then they stopped.

"Our food during these trips was beans, bacon and sour dough; then we shot moose, bear, caribou, geese and rabbits. We often worked for thirty hours without stopping, then slept as little as possible. We always wanted to get over the ground as fast as we could go. When it came summer time and we could use our boat it was easy going, but then we had to be anxious about the canyons and the rapids. We had no maps or guides and had to judge from the condition of the water when there was danger ahead. Then we would get out and go along the bank until we discovered to what sort of place we were coming. Those bad places on the Yukon are well known now to all who go that way, but between the time that we first paddled there and the present day the canyons and rapids have proved death traps to many men.

"During this first trip I passed the place where afterward gold was discovered, but there wasn't a sign to show me what it was. We kept going north on the Yukon until we came to the natives in the interior. Ever since then we have done a great deal of work among the natives in the interior and the north of Alaska and along the Yukon River. The natives have become Christianized everywhere and we have given them schools and hospitals as well as the mission stations, which in a measure comprise schools and hospitals as well as places for religious exercises. Everywhere one travels to-day one is struck with the gentleness and devotion to the church of these natives who were once so wild and hostile.

"After we had travelled north five hundred miles we travelled fifteen hundred miles toward Bering Sea. When winter came again my companion returned to the coast, but I kept on alone. By this time I had gotten some dogs to haul my provisions. But it was pretty lonely travelling for hundreds of miles without seeing even an Indian."

We Built a Circle of Fire.

"What was the biggest fight you ever had in the course of your missionary work?" asked the interviewer.

The Bishop in spite of his gentle and kindly manner has seen some fighting in his Alaskan travels, and he had to think for a moment before he said, with a reminiscent flash in his black eyes:—

"Well, I think the most thrilling experience we ever had was not with human beings, but with wolves. I believe, too, that it is not usual for travellers to be attacked by wolves in Alaska, although I cannot understand why.

"On this evening we had heard the cries of the wolves for some time. Nothing sends quite the same shiver through the average human being. We made a halt as soon as possible, and immediately built a circle of fire for our protection from the animals which we knew were hot on our trail. Inside this circle we placed provisions, dogs and ourselves, leaving an exit, of course, through which we could escape to make a last stand if they rushed us. Our fire was hardly going well before they were upon us. They came close to the fire, their tongues lolling out—about thirty of them—a sickening enough sight to two men out there in that wilderness. If they had had the courage they could easily have rushed through the fire and gotten us, but, of course, we relied on the wolf nature to prevent them from taking this bold action. We had to shoot quickly, however, and we had to think of our ammunition. It was necessary that every shot should kill a wolf. To make the wolves come out into the light where we could get a good sight of them we threw brands from the fire at them, then when they were in just the right position as targets we picked them off. As each one fell his comrades tore him to pieces, and as they devoured the dead members of the pack their ferocious appetite was sated. So at last the remnant of the pack turned and went back through the woods. I never shall forget that scene—the great reaches of snow stretching in every direction, illuminated with the Arctic light, and those slinking figures moving off between the straight black spruce trees.

"It is changed to some extent in Alaska nowadays. There are better trails, and we almost always find some trail, but we still leave the beaten path now and then and go across country. We have missions away beyond the Arctic circle, where it is 55, 60 and 76 degrees below zero. I have been out on the trail along the Dahl River when it was 76 degrees below. I don't know whether I would have lived through it if I had not come to a small Indian encampment where I found shelter. Nowadays we almost always strike a cabin where we can stop for the night, although it is still necessary for us to siwash it sometimes. We used to siwash it every night. Snow makes a pretty soft bed, and when you have made your shelter of boughs, put on all the clothes you've got and built a fire so that it comes toward you, you are fairly comfortable."

"Did you see much of the life of the camps after the gold finds?" asked the interviewer.

"I was the first minister in most of the new camps," said the Bishop, "and wherever a camp was opened on our side, meaning the side of the United States of America, I started a mission, and in some places I started hospitals. When I visited a camp I was received with the greatest courtesy. The men of the camp came to meet me and we talked over what could be done for the benefit of all concerned—that is, what the Church could do for them in the circumstances. At first there was little dissipation and the men were of a fine, hardy class. Like all the real pioneers to a new country, they were strong, brave and able. But as soon as the camps became rich the scenes were fearful.

"The men gambled and drank. They did worse things. About the only crime we hadn't was murder. There was very little shooting. But the gambling and the dance halls were wild. When the men went wrong I tried to talk to them, and they took it very well. There were many of them splendid fellows. Often I would step into a camp fire group and begin to talk to men, and find them well educated, fine young chaps, college men, many of them. Almost always they were likable men. Of course, I am speaking of the men who came as prospectors, not those who came to prey upon them. They all received me well everywhere, for they knew that whatever I did for reform was done openly and aboveboard. To-day, in large part, I believe, because of the sentiment aroused by our missions, there are no dance halls in Alaska and no public gambling places. Of course, the government is directly responsible for this, and I don't want to take any credit from it, but I believe we also have had a good deal to do with it.

"One of the very bad crises during the early days of the gold finds was the 'Soapy' Smith crowd at Skagway. There were seventy-five members of the crowd, all gamblers and all sure-thing men; they robbed men right and left, and 'Soapy' Smith sent out lieutenants all along the line to all the camps. At that time I was starting the hospital at Skagway and whenever any one was shot over at Smith's place they used to send for me. The men who had been wounded trusted me, told me who their friends at home were, and if they died I often had messages to send to relatives and friends. When they got well again they were my friends for life. It didn't much matter what their religion was. Men of all creeds gave me their confidence when they were wounded. At last a vigilance committee got after Smith. They decided to take him one day when he had gone down to the boat landing to meet a fresh boatload of victims. He saw the crowd coming and pulled his gun, but some one among his enemies got him with the first shot. But even as he fell he kept his head and fired a shot and killed the marshal."

A glint of appreciation sparkled in the Bishop's black eyes. "He was a nervy fellow, that Smith," he commented, "and he was a clever fellow, too."

"But I thought you said there wasn't much shooting up there?" questioned the interviewer.

"Oh, we didn't call that much," said the Bishop, with a twinkle.

"I used to see some of those sure-thing lieutenants of Smith's in the jail at Sitka," he added. "They got quite a number of them in jail at last. When I went to the jail to hold services and distribute reading matter I used to see these men. I could never get them to promise that after they came out they would take up a legitimate calling and lead different lives, but they showed their liking for me in one way. Whenever I held a service or gave a talk to the men if any half crazy Indian or other obstreperous prisoner made a disturbance they immediately batted him over the head. They insisted upon the most perfect conduct on these occasions. They remembered that I had helped to bury 'Soapy' Smith and others of their comrades and they were grateful. One thing they said to me was, 'Well, if Christianity is what you tell us it is, Bishop, then we've never understood it before.'

"Nowadays," added the Bishop proudly, "we have plenty of good clubrooms for the boys, so that they can always find some legitimate amusement and companionship. They weren't bad boys, but in a country like that, with the darkness and loneliness, it doesn't somehow take long to go bad if there isn't anything else to do. These clubrooms which we have opened are something like the Young Men's Christian Associations. We have also twenty-eight missions, six hospitals and three industrial schools. And I want to say that if it were not for the women we wouldn't be able to have much missionary work in Alaska."

AT 37 HE IS "YOUNGEST GRANDFATHER"

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MELVIN PIERCE YOUNG DAVIS, who, by special dispensation, received the lectures in the law school of the University of Georgia without having had previous training in any accredited school, is the father of his first son, after having been a grandfather for two years. He is believed to be, at thirty-seven, the youngest grandfather in the United States of two years' claim to title.

Davis has had several daughters. The eldest one has been married for three years, and is the mother of a boy two years old. The latest addition to the Davis family, who has been named Rowe Fullilove, after the Mayor of Athens, Ga., and the Davis family physician, is two years younger than his nephew.

"Young" Davis, as he is generally known, was one of twelve children, his father having been married three times. His father, who is eighty-six years old and living at Athens, is a veteran of the war between the States. Desiring to perpetuate the name of the chief whom he had followed during that war, he called his son after him, with some embellishments of his own. Davis' initials are in fact as numerous as the letters of his last name.

Davis was as a boy a worker in the cotton mills—he went to Athens while a mere child. At the age of seventeen he was married to Miss Anne Smith. The family began to grow with systematic regularity. The cotton mill operative soon found that he could not support his flock—all girls—on his wages. He learned the barber's trade, which he followed Saturday evenings and at night [illegible] Athens. One of the daughters married [illegible] judges, and he has now been notified that he has passed

B. F. M. P. Y. DAVIS, OF ATHENS, GA.

added to the family from time to time. The cost of living increased, and he soon found shaving was as inadequate as working in a cotton mill when it came to rearing and educating so many young girls. The grandson then came to the home—making Davis probably the youngest grandfather in the United States at the age of thirty-five—to be followed two years later by another little babe of his own—a son—younger than the grandchild.

The legal profession seemed to offer a field for the gratification of the ambition of Davis as well as affording a better living for his family. He began the study of law two years ago—after the little grandson came to the home. He read law in the offices of his young friends who had entered that profession. He attended all the courts regularly—from those of the Mayor and the Justices of the Peace to the Superior and federal tribunals. Through the kindly offices of friends he was finally enabled to take the lectures in the university law school.

Several weeks ago, with a number of other applicants, Davis stood for examination before the board of examiners, under the direction of the Superior Court