

THE CANADIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE

• • AND MISSION NEWS • •

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada.

Vol. VIII.

TORONTO, JULY, 1894.

No. 97

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

No. 97. —IN MEMORIAM, WILLIAM McMURRAY.

IN our issue of January, 1890, we gave a brief account of the Venerable Archdeacon McMurray, rector of the historic town of Niagara, and with it also his portrait. Now that he has gone from our midst, it seems fitting that once more we should look upon his face—a face which for sixty years has been familiar to many as that of an earnest and eminent clergyman. Though born in Ireland (in 1810), he was practically a Canadian, having been brought to this country as an infant. His early home was Toronto, or York, as it was called in pioneer days, and with the feet of a very little child he toddled to the famous school of Dr. Strachan, then held in a small frame building on King street, a little east of Yonge. Many famous men were educated by Dr. (afterwards Bishop) Strachan. They have now, probably, all gone to their rest — Archdeacon McMurray, we are informed, having been the only one of the pioneer band surviving. Some of the names of his earliest pupils — names afterwards

written upon the page of Canadian history— may be seen to-day carved upon the outside boards of a little frame building in the town of Cornwall, diocese of Ontario.

Bishop Strachan not only guided the boyish steps of William McMurray, but directed also his studies of more mature years. He sat at the bishop's feet as a student in divinity. When twenty years of age he began to do duty as a catechist in the territory lying contiguous to York, in such places as Mimico, Weston, Thornhill and York Mills. Two years afterwards he was appointed by the Society for

Converting and Civilizing the Indians to visit the Indians on the shores of Lakes Huron and Superior, with a view to establishing a mission amongst them. His journey was through trackless forests, and he embarked upon it scarcely knowing whither he went. He applied to Sir John Colborne, at the time Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, for directions as to his journey, and the only enlightenment he received was that if he were to go by Buffalo and Lake Erie to Detroit he might receive information as to the rest of his journey! Thus, partly by steamer, partly by schooner, and partly by canoe, he made his way to the

Georgian Bay, visiting Manitoulin and such other Indian missions as he could meet with, till he arrived at Sault Ste. Marie, then merely a post of the Hudson's Bay Company, the mention of which always indicates a distant land far off amidst the snows and the woods of Canada. Here he established his headquarters, and set up a school for Indian children, at the same time holding divine service in their midst.

The story of the young catechist setting off, when twenty-three years of age, in search of Bishop Stewart (then the only bish-



THE LATE VEN. ARCHDEACON McMURRAY.

op in Upper and Lower Canada, or, as we understand it, Ontario, with the Northwest and Quebec), expecting to find him in Toronto; his disappointment at hearing that his lordship had left that place for Montreal; his tedious journey thither, only to find the bishop still further away; his continued pursuit of holy orders to St. Armand's, now Frelighsburg, where, at last, the bishop was found, has been often told, and illustrates well the hardships and other peculiar features of early days. His return, after a journey of over eleven hundred miles, not in rest and luxury, as the same