

# Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXV., No. 39.

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 28, 1900.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid.

## Sunday and Week Day at Fort Churchill.

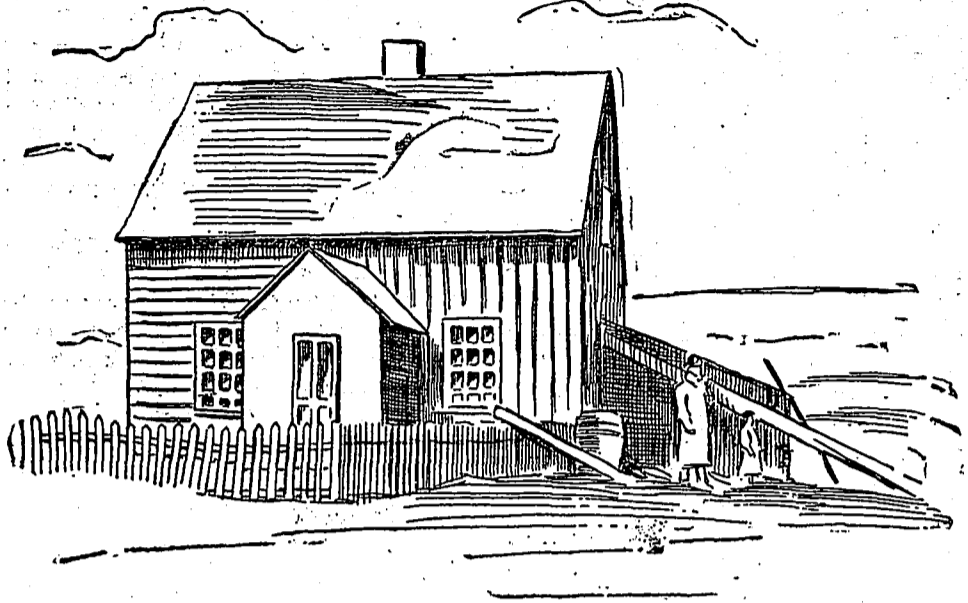
(By the Rev.-J. Lofthouse, in 'Church Missionary Gleaner.')

It is a Sunday morning in July. Our Indians have laid aside their guns, and are ready to spend the day for God. At 8.30 the first bell rings, and they gather in our little church for a service in Chipewyan. It is very pleasant to hear them begin by singing:

'This is God's day,  
We wish to pray,  
And sing to Jesus.'

Most of them are very poor, but they come to church bright and clean, and with hair tidy, a great contrast to their appearance ten years ago, when, with long hair hanging over their faces, and very dirty deer-skin robes, they sat and listened to the story of God's love. The Gospel has certainly led these Indians to think of bodily as well as spiritual improvement.

At eleven a.m. our small English-speaking congregation gathers together, and very heartily enters into the service. Not one is absent—father, mother, and children all join in praising the Lord and Giver of all. A few years ago they would have spent the Sabbath in hunting or sitting in their miserable homes and smoking all the day, with not one thought of the Great Creator. In the afternoon, a few Eskimo, from their camp six miles away, gather in the house of God. They are a motley group, very strange looking animals, clad from head to foot in deer skins, men and women so much alike in dress that a *kablanart* (foreigner), would fail to distinguish them. They, poor souls, have had few opportunities of learning of 'the great Attata' (Father). Their homes are far away in the land of everlasting ice and snow, and only during the few weeks of summer are they within reach of the mission. They are very fond of music, and try to join in the singing, but it is not a



THE MISSION HOUSE, FORT CHURCHILL.

great success. Then shortly and simply is set before them the story of God's love. They listen with ears and eyes both wide open, and occasionally also the mouth, when one and another exclaims, 'Koveasukpoon-ga' ('I rejoice'). Very few of them have as yet been admitted into Christ's outward and visible Church, but nearly all of them are deeply attached to the mission, and miss no opportunity of learning to read 'the Book.' Sometimes they even walk into our kitchen at five o'clock in the morning, asking to be taught to read 'the Book.'

In the evening we have another service either in Chipewyan or English, sometimes in both. Then the people disperse to their tents four or five miles away, many of them ending the day with family prayers and singing of hymns.

On Monday morning, at nine o'clock, the missionary hurries off to school, but before he reaches there the children are gathered in their places, waiting and anxious to be taught. We begin with a chant, then pray-

er, and a short scripture lesson. Now that it is summer we are able to write, but in winter this is impossible, for the ink would freeze on the pen and the fingers stick fast to the holder. School goes on steadily until noon. Then we return to work in the garden, or do some repairs, for the missionary here has to do everything for himself. After dinner we start to visit the Eskimo in their distant camp. Not very parson-like is the missionary—no black coat and hat, but a pair of mole-skin trousers, water-tight seal-skin boots, old coat, straw hat covered with a large veil, and gloves. Fancy gloves and a veil! But even the natives wear them, for it is quite impossible to do without them. The mosquitoes are in swarms, and soon the whole body is covered with them. The boots up to the knees are very necessary, for our way is mostly through swamps. You do well if you do not sink in above the knees, and get a soaking. Roads of any kind are unknown in this part of the world. When within a mile or so of the camp we see some objects running to meet us. Are they bears, or what? They look very much like them, but drawing nearer we see they are Eskimo boys and girls coming to meet the *ikseareak* (teacher). They take possession of him, some taking his hands, some hanging on to his coat-tails. Thus we go on, singing hymns or repeating texts of scripture.

What a strange village! There are about a dozen tents, not pitched on a soft, smooth place, but right on the stones. How ever do they sleep in such places? Well, an Eskimo can sleep anywhere, and a few stones are of no account. And oh, what a dirty, greasy mess, a perfumery of the strongest kind! Never mind; do not think of it, and you will soon get over it. We will enter into one tent. See, there is no fire, nor any chairs, tables, or other furniture, except a few skins spread on the ground. We take our seat on these; men, women, and children crowd around; and the work of teaching begins. One man, stripped to the waist, is mending an old kettle; another is forming the ribs of a *kyak* (Eskimo boat). A woman is diligently chewing away at some seal-skin (not very sweet!), whilst another is sewing boots.



GROUP OF ESKIMO, FORT CHURCHILL.