



OFF THE COAST OF NEWFOUNDLAND

The means of communication around Newfoundland were then small indeed—education had not sent the schoolmaster much abroad—newspapers were few and far between, as may be gathered from the following:—The Bishop was examining, as late as 1863, a Sunday school class in a large out-harbour, and asking, “who is Governor of Newfoundland,” received as a reply, “Pontius Pilate, sir.”

In 1844 there were, according to the report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 24 clergy in Newfoundland, and 30,084 Church members. “The most pressing need of all,” he writes, “is men, laborers who can and will work while it is called to-day.”

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Report of 1845 says:—“Since the arrival of Bishop Feild in his diocese, his repeated and importunate demand upon the Society has been for additional men. Two he has maintained altogether at his own cost besides two young students whom he is both supporting and educating.”

In 1846 he writes, “And what is the money without the men—the right men—patient and laborious, content with slow beginnings and small results.”

Bishop Feild was himself strong in every way—filling well the requisites which Bishop Medley set forth in 1849 as necessary for a Bishop of Red River, “a man of iron constitution, loud voice—able to row, swim and do all sorts of rough mechanical work. An unhandy scholar will never do.”

As in the case of Selwyn, the first bishop of New Zealand, the vigorous training of England’s public school system told in after years. Athletic, many is the story he has told me of town and gown days, of the Green fights at Kidlington, and how he stopped them. Fond of active exercise—when in a boat, being conveyed from place to place—with the

Gospel of God in his hand, he always, as an English schoolmaster informed me, “took an oar sir,—a great man at an oar the Bishop was.” He was thoroughly unselfish, and despised popularity. This was clearly evidenced by his tilts with the Newfoundland Bible Society, and the advocates of the Deceased Wife’s Sister’s Bill. In connection with the latter, the brave bishop writes, “If I were popular, I could do much to exalt self, degrade the Church and ruin souls.”

In 1846 he was greatly cheered by the sympathy of her Majesty the Queen Dowager in restoring the church at Great Placentia, which had been erected through the

liberality and personal exertion of his late Majesty King William IV. in 1785, while stationed off the coast in the “Pegasus.” No sooner was Queen Adelaide informed of the grievous decay into which the building had fallen than she most graciously undertook the sole expense of restoring it.

When he came to Newfoundland he found in the out-harbours and smaller settlements great ignorance about matters religious. Any man able to read was accounted the person to baptize (?) “Who baptized this child?” “One John Bird, and a mighty fine reader he wur.” I myself remember a man who began the marriage service in the middle of the room—towards dusk, gradually nearing the light until his eyes could see no more, and then coolly telling the couple, “Thar, dat’ll do—married as fur as I can see.”

One kind of prophet in White Bay gave as a reason why he did not marry as well as baptize that the marriage service was too hard for him. But many persons had the service read over them as a provisional marriage “till a parson come’d around.” Dear, kind, simple hearted people they admired and deeply loved their truly noble bishop.

In 1846, the great fire in St. John’s destroyed the parish church and the bishop was persuaded to go to England and tell English hearts of the wants of his rocky, sea-girt diocese. He saw the necessity of a cathedral. As the vigorous beating of the heart will convey warmth to the extremities, so the cathedral—the home of every churchman—will convey warm religious life into the out-harbors. Upon the day upon which the foundations were dug the Church ship “Hawk” (the inestimable benefit given to the good bishop by the Primus of Scotland) arrived in St. John’s with two clergy and three catechists, who had been attracted by his self sacrifice. Of one, attracted by the same from the lovely rectory nestling at the west foot of the Malvern Hills to Labrador, he says: “The