

MISSION WORK IN THE FAR NORTH WEST.

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 THE following extract is from a recent letter of Rev. Dr. Reeve, Bishop of Mackenzie River. The committee have recently made an annual grant to the bishop for mission work in his diocese:

"Fort Simpson, my headquarters, was the scene of my first labors in the mission field twenty-three years ago. On returning to it, after an absence of thirteen years, many changes are noticeable, and many memories, some sad, some pleasant, are awakened. Old friends have gone; well-remembered faces have passed away; a new generation has sprung up. Some spray, however, from the advancing wave of civilization has reached even here. Twenty-three years ago the journey from England occupied five months, and longer; now it would be possible to accomplish it in one month. Then the railroad did not come within 2,500 miles of us; now it is only 1,000 miles away! Then there was no steamboat within 2,000 miles; now one passes our very door. Then, and for nearly twenty years afterwards, it was necessary to order our clothes, groceries, flour, etc., two years beforehand, and sometimes they were three years, and even more, before they reached us; now we can receive them within nine months! Then we received our letters twice a year; now we can get them three, and occasionally four, times! In this I should be glad of still further improvement. It is three months since I heard from my wife and children, and am afraid that nearly four more must pass before I hear again.

"Instead, however, of indulging in these reflections, it will be of more interest to tell you about the work. The new see of Selkirk has taken a big slice off the western part of the diocese, but it is still over 500,000 square miles in extent! Each missionary has a parish of about 100,000 square miles! The stations in the two extremes are more than 1,100 miles apart, and the nearest are nearly 200 miles from each other! On entering the diocese from the south, the first place we come to is Fort Resolution, a Hudson Bay Company's post on the southeast shore of Great Slave Lake. Here we have a mission station and diocesan school. The latter has been in existence only two years, and has supplied a long-felt want. There are only two scholars at present, but we hope the number will be increased next year. Annual subscriptions of £10 for the support of a scholar would be very thankfully received. The Indians here are Chipewyans, and are all Romanists, but many of them have shown a desire to become acquainted with our doctrine, and have visited the Rev. W. Spendlove freely, in spite of their priest's protestations.

"Travelling westward across Great Slave Lake, and passing Providence, where the Roman Catholics have a large establishment—two priests, seven 'brothers,' and eight or ten 'sisters'—we next come to Fort Simpson, my headquarters. This is the oldest mission in diocese, but not the most encouraging. The Indians are called Slavics. Their own name is 'Tess cho tene'—the Big River People. Most of them are baptized, but are rather apathetic, and not at all eager to learn. Nearly half are Romanists. The whites, too, are not all that could be desired. Since Mr. and Mrs. Spendlove left in 1887 there has been no one resident here for more than a year at a time, and the work has suffered in consequence. The Rev. J. Hawksley has been in charge the past year, but is now at Fort Norman to take the place of the Rev. D. N. Kirkby, who, I am sorry to say, has left us.

"Fort Norman is a nicely situated place 300 miles north of this, whence there is a fine view of Bear Rock, some spurs of the Rocky Mountains, and other hills in the distance. Our Indians here are not numerous, but the work amongst them has been encouraging on the whole. They belong to the Hare Indian tribe. Before a missionary was stationed here I used to visit them every spring, and was often much cheered by their readiness to learn. I trust Mr. and Mrs. Hawksley will be spared to continue the good work carried on by Mr. Kirkby, Bishop Bompas, and others.

"About half way between Fort Simpson and Fort Norman is Fort Wrigley, a small post established a few years ago. Previously the Indians used to come to Fort Simpson to trade their furs and reindeer meat. We thus had an opportunity of teaching them, and most of them were adherents; but now we see them so seldom that some are becoming careless and indifferent, and others are joining the Romanists. When asked as to their religion, when the census was taken last year, some of them replied, 'We go to whoever comes first.' Of others the sad plaint was, 'No one prays for me!' They are wishful for a missionary; but, alas! I have no funds to place one there, and I fear, unless some one sends a substitute, we shall lose them all.

"For another part of our adherents, the Trout Lake and Hay River Indians, there is the same crying need. Some years ago, when I spent several weeks amongst them in the woods, they gave me more encouragement and showed more eagerness to learn than any other Indians I ever taught. They became adherents, and remained loyal for years, but now they are beginning to leave us because there is no one here to visit them occasionally and teach them. It is sad to think that the work of years is being lost, and going to the benefit of the Romanists. But what can we do without men or means?"