

Wearied with the troubles of his colony, and his health failing fast, Lord Selkirk returned to Britain in 1818, and in 1819 was so ill as to be compelled to go to the south of France, whither he went to die. Before going, true to his promise, he committed the duty of supplying to the colonists a minister of their own faith to Mr. John Pritchard, at that time in London in his employ. On the 13th October 1819, the Hudson's Bay Company through this gentleman's advice and much to the regret of the Selkirk Colonists appointed with a grant of £100 a year a minister for them of another faith than their own. This was the more trying to the colonists, that the French Canadian Roman Catholics had, through Lord Selkirk's assistance, had in 1818 a religious teacher of their own church sent to them. The missionary of the Church Mission Society and his successors were men of zeal and devotion. The Highland Colonists however, were not satisfied. They maintained in their homes their sacred fire; family worship and cottage prayer meetings were well kept up. They attended the services of the company's chaplain at St. John, but they held their own faith; their own version of the psalms was sung; the clergyman wore no ecclesiastical garments to which they were unaccustomed; and when the Bishop of Montreal visited the settlement in 1844 none of the Selkirk colonists would receive confirmation. In Governor McKenzie's time, between 1820-30, in Governor Christie's time, between 1830-40, they held repeated meetings and sent petitions—unavailing petitions—to Britain. In June, 1844, through Governor Finlayson's advice petitions and claims were sent to the Hudson's Bay Company, in London, but still to no effect. The company would acknowledge no claim; nor I suppose was there any legal claim upon them. Put not your trust in princes. A copy of their last petition was, however, sent to the moderator of the new-born and zealous Free Church of Scotland and given to Dr. John Bonar, of the Colonial Committee. It was turned over to the Presbyterian Church of Canada and to a relative of Dr. Bonar, viz., Dr. Robert Burns, of Toronto—"clarum et venerabile nomen"—a man than whom there stands none higher in the missionary annals of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. With the prescient eye of a leader, Dr. Burns selected Mr. John Black, one of the first band of students that entered Knox College, Toronto. After a long journey over the

prairies from the Mississippi, Mr. Black arrived in Red River 19th of September, 1851. On the first Sabbath after his arrival Mr. Black worshipped with the settlers in St. John's. On the following Sabbath, in the manse which they had erected on the site of the present Kildonan manse, 300 Presbyterians with their young Canadian minister resumed the broken line of succession of 33 years before, when the godly elder Sutherland had ceased to conduct their devotions. The period of 40 years from the landing of the first band of Selkirk settlers on the shore of Hudson's Bay had passed when Mr. Black reached Red River. Such was the infancy of Presbyterianism on the Red River. An uncertain, sickly, and much threatened infancy it had been, but life remained, and if there is one name deserving notice more than another during this period it is that of Alexander Ross, sheriff of Assiniboia, to whom afterwards Dr. Black became related by marriage.

ITS CHILDHOOD

With what words, brethren, shall I characterize the man who gave its visibility to Presbyterianism in the Northwest. Like James Sutherland, John Black was an eminently pious and devoted man; he was besides a politic, peace-loving and conciliatory man. The church needs variety of temper and disposition—diversities of gifts in its ministers. No doubt, under the circumstances, he was the right man in the right place. He gained the esteem and support of the Hudson's Bay Company, which had been previously averse, if not hostile to Presbyterianism; he won the respect of the other churches of the land; he was beloved by his people. To distant Athabasca and Mackenzie River, the aroma of his goodness extended. He was more over a student, a thinker, a man of pulpit power, and an earnest social reformer. The degree of Doctor of Divinity, given him by Queen's University, but put in definite form what every one who knew him felt was his due. For eleven laborious years he stood alone.

It was in 1862 that a man of kindred spirit joined him, under the auspices of the new body of Canada Presbyterians, who as Presbyterian Church of Canada and United Presbyterian Church had united the year before—I mean James Nisbet. Kildonan and Little Britain then represented the sum total of Northwest Presbyterianism. The one was the Selkirk Colony, the other almost the only