



THE SOREL CHURCH OF EARLY DAYS.*

was under the willing care of Mr. Campbell, whose architectural acquirements and seemingly taste on all churchly points, enabled him to lay before the parishioners of Yarmouth, a building in which they might always feel a pleasure in entering, and one which, as long as it stands, will be a memorial of the reverend gentleman's residence in the parish. The furniture of the church was the gift of individuals, viz., reading desk and pulpit, Eagle lectern, communion table and chancel rails, all in polished black walnut; and chancel carpet, fald stools, gas, standards, etc. On the death of the Venerable Rector Moody in 1883 the Rev. H. L. A. Almon was read in, and inducted Rector in the summer of 1884.

A VISIT TO A SUN DANCE.

By REV. FRANK V. BAKER, GRENFELL, N. W. T.

THE Sun Dance of the Indians of the Western Plains has been often described, but in many cases by those who have not personally been eye witnesses of what they relate. Perhaps, therefore, a description of what takes place by me who was present, may be of interest, especially as the strange ceremony is probably dying out. It is difficult to realize now that civilization has spread over the great western Territories of Canada, that scarcely ten years ago the Indian bands were wandering over the prairie, unhindered by the presence, and ignorant of the ways of the white man. To-day the Indians are settled on reserves learning the unaccustomed arts of farming, while civilization and Christianity are making rapid strides, especially among the young people and children. But the

old religion of the Indians will not so soon be uprooted, at any rate in the hearts of those who have grown up amongst its superstitions. They will still offer strips of colored cotton to appease the imaginary spirits that people the woods and lakes, and every year are still found votaries of the terrible Great Spirit, who is worshipped by the sufferings and tortures undertaken at the great annual religious festival of the Sun Dance.

This dance is not, as travellers have often declared, performed by the young men to gain a reputation for courage and endurance, but is engaged in by any who having suffered misfortune at the hand of God think to regain his favor by voluntary self-torture. Let me first describe the place in which this dance, the chief religious observance of the Indians of the Plains, is celebrated. Driving from Grenfell, a small town on the Canadian Pacific Railway and the centre of a flourishing farming district, about eight miles brings us to the Reserve and the encampment of Indians. The spot chosen for the temporary village is a small plain open to the south, backed on the north by thick woods, and here are gathered about one hundred and twenty tepees or tents, containing a population of some eight hundred or a thousand men, women and children. In the centre of the camp stands the great tent or tabernacle for the religious ceremony. It is constructed in a circular form, fifty feet in diameter, of poles tied together by strips of bark and willow withes. The centre is supported by a stout tree fixed in the ground about twenty feet high. Canvas from the tepees is hung around the walls, but the central part is open to the sky. From the ceiling are hung banners of brightly colored cotton, and an inner fence of green boughs is seen to run three parts of the way round the interior. There is a gap in this fence on the northern side of the tent, and in the recess thus formed a sanctuary is made opposite the midday sun. This holy place consists of a rectangular hollow cut in the ground, in which sweet grass is burnt before a buffalo's head, which is said to be an emblem of plenty. In front of this sanctuary sits the chief medicine man, gravely smoking, and before him burns a fire of wood to the spirits whose figures are carved on the centre pole.

All the Indians who are to take part in the ceremonies, whether as musicians or dancers, are re-

*This was one of the earliest churches built in Canada. A full account of it, together with a picture of the present Christ Church, Sorel, P. Q. which replaced it in 1841, is given in the August and September numbers of this magazine for the year 1887.