

The Swiss and Piedmontese on Red River.*

By REV. DR. BRYCE.

NEARLY twenty years ago the writer had occasion to stop over on his journey through Minnesota at Breckenridge, a small town on the Red River, which was for a time the terminus of the railway by which travellers came to Manitoba. Spending the night at this place he fell into conversation with an American settler, who declared himself to be the descendant of one of the former Swiss residents of Red River. This allusion led the writer to investigate the matter, and now the facts are being recovered of a former considerable settlement from Switzerland and Piedmont, near where Winnipeg now stands. Of this colony there is scarcely a trace remaining except in the books, a list of which is given below. The last of these, published during 1891, is a most interesting account by a Swiss woman, Mrs. Adams, of her journey and that of her countrymen, in 1821, from Switzerland to the then inhospitable banks of the Red River.

But even before these Switzers, there had come to Red River, as escort to Lord Selkirk, in 1816, a band of military settlers. These had been given holdings on what is now the St. Boniface side of Red River. Many of them spoke German,

*Journal of Rev. John West (London) 1824.

The Red River Settlement by Alexander Ross (London) 1856.

Brochures of the Manitoba Historical Society, Winnipeg, 1878-91.

Manitoba: Infancy, Growth, etc., by the writer (London) 1882.

Early Days at Red River Settlement, Minnesota Historical Society (St. Paul), 1891.