

Missionary Intelligence.

REPORT OF MISSION WORK AT OAK LAKE, MANITOBA.

AFTER a very pleasant journey together with other students from our College, the incidents of which shall not soon be forgotten, your missionary reached his field of labor on the 18th of April. Oak Lake field forms part of the vast extent of territory now occupied by the Presbytery of Brandon, and is situated on the line of the Canada Pacific Railway, about thirty-five miles west of the town of Brandon, and 170 miles west of Winnipeg. This was now the third year since its settlement by those who were to transform it from a hunting ground and scene of trade with the Indians to a farming community.

Previous to 1882 there was but one white settler, now all land available for agriculture has been taken up and much of it brought under cultivation. Notwithstanding this, partly owing to the evil system which exists by which speculators are enabled to hold land until by the industry of the settlers it becomes valuable, and partly owing to the fact that each settler can obtain, by grant and pre-emption, a half section, or 320 acres, the result is that the settlers are necessarily a considerable distance apart.

At first sight, one who has never before been on the prairie cannot but be struck by the scarcity of buildings and fences. On many North-West farms the buildings consist of a house or shanty, and what the new-comer naturally considers to be two or three stacks of straw. These latter, however, the stranger finds on closer inspection to consist of stables and granaries, covered by heaps of hay or straw to protect from the rigors of the North-West winter, timber being as yet too expensive to allow the average settler to make other provision. Oak Lake, from which the field receives its name, is a body of water seven miles long by five wide, and lies about seven miles from Oak Lake Station. Formerly its banks were covered with abundance of large oak timber; nearly all of this has, however, disappeared.

Mission work in this field was begun in the first year of its settlement by him who now occupies the position of President of our Students' Missionary Society, and the people of Oak Lake have not forgotten the zeal and earnestness with which their first missionary prosecuted his work among them.

Things have greatly changed since then. At that time Oak Lake was the terminus of the C.P.R., and consequently there would be found among its inhabitants large numbers of navvies employed in the construction of the railway, and new settlers prospecting for homes. Since then the line has been extended to the Rockies, and the tent of the navy and settler has been moved far westward.

In 1882 this field extended so far west as to include Virden. This village has now an ordained missionary, and Oak Lake field has been reduced in size so that your missionary, in the past year, found it to extend only some thirty-five miles in length, and varying in width from six to sixteen miles.

It has been said that the first mission work was done during the summer of 1882; during the winter that followed no services were held. However, the next summer a missionary who had but recently come from the Emerald Isle was appointed to work here. When his appointment had expired he again