

miles from Winnipeg. On Sunday morning he held a confirmation service in St. Paul's church, Shoal Lake, when seven were confirmed. The Archbishop also preached in the evening service. The congregations were very good although the day was so stormy that doubtless many were prevented from coming in from the country. The storm was general throughout the province. The bishop enjoyed the kind hospitality of his old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Beeston, and had the pleasure of having as a fellow guest, Mr. Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, of Qu'Appelle Fort, whose hospitality he partook of in February, 1866, when he made a long missionary visitation by dog train. Mr. Hooper seemed very well and possessing the confidence and regard of his people.

On Saturday, November 27th, the Archbishop visited Virden, 180 miles from Winnipeg, and was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Stewart, whose hospitality he formerly enjoyed at Kola. At the morning service there was a confirmation, when three candidates were confirmed. There had been already this year a confirmation in April by the Bishop of Qu'Appelle. There was also a service of the Holy Communion, when the Archbishop was celebrant. The Archbishop preached at the evening service in connection with the Day of Intercession for Missions. There was a good attendance at both services. Mr. King continues his earnest work, but the country around Virden has only been moderately successful. The crops for some years have not averaged well. Still the debt on the beautiful church and parsonage is being gradually lessened, and though Virden is a rectory it has well maintained its help to the mission fund of the diocese. The Archbishop returned to Winnipeg on Monday.

Santa Claus.

Nothing but ice, snow and perpetual darkness. Ice that week by week gets thicker; snow that day by day falls deeper; and darkness that hour by hour casts a heavier pall over the desolate landscape; for the brief northern summer has long since flown carrying the sunshine with her, and now winter holds the Arctic regions in his icy grasp. The air grows colder and colder as the cruel polar wind sweeps with a despairing wail over the monotonous country; save this eerie sound no noise disturbs the solemn silence of the scene. No ordinary human life could exist in such a climate, yet looming up before us is actually a house. True it is entirely cased in snow and ice, till it looks almost like some frost palace, but the fact remains; it is actually a house. In it dwells a very strange old man—perhaps the funniest old man you ever heard of. He is nearly 1900 years old, and yet, as time goes on, his hair never gets one bit whiter, nor his step feebler. No one remembers him as a boy, and yet he has perpetual youth—perhaps because he sleeps so much. I dare say you will think him a very lazy old man, for he sleeps more than eleven months out of the twelve; but when he is awake, he does more work in three weeks than anyone else would do in as many years. Though living in such a cold place, he has no fire, and though he never sees the sun yet the stars

are for him sufficient light. Everyone loves him, particularly the children; and his heart is so large that he has room in it for them all. Because of his goodness they call him "Father," some say "Christmas," some "Santa Claus," others "Noel," it matters not he is one and the same.

Once a year only, can he leave his icy palace, and it is in preparation of this important event that he awakens himself at least three weeks beforehand. There is so much to be done that he is busy all day long; there are presents to be packed up for each of his little friends; and as the latter are very numerous and scattered all over the world, he is often at a loss what to take them. Then, do you know what this cunning old man does? He sends the little snow birds out and they listen at all the windows and doors till they find out what the children want. They often take a long time, for in winter people keep their window shut so tight the birds can hardly hear the whispering voices within. But there are some places, where no trees grow, and where the houses are so dark and dismal that the little birds are afraid to venture. How then, does Father Xmas ever hear about the boys and girls living there? Well, sometimes he never hears, and sometimes children who have nice warm homes think of the little homeless ones, and then the snow birds are sure to hear all about them. Such little feathered messengers as they carry a double burden of wishes, break forth into the sweetest song, whilst flying back to the cold white north away so far.

What a whirring of wings there is around the palace a week before Xmas. Every minute either a letter written in some straggling, unformed hand, or else a feathered messenger arrives and then, of course, there are lots of parcels to do up. The little birds with their sweet songs, who carry so many wishes, please the old man best, and into the packages he wraps a double amount of happiness.

At last, all is finished, the last string tied, and then is heard such a pawing and stamping of the ground, mingled with the merry noise of sleigh-bells. With a big gust the hall door blows open, and then, standing in readiness is a gorgeous red painted sleigh and a pair of beautiful reindeer. The rig is loaded in a trice, and with bells jangling and tinkling Santa Claus starts on his journey. The stars shine brightly in a cloudless heaven; like lightning the steeds glide over the densely packed snow, till they reach the boundaries of civilization. Then they change the mode of travel, for Santa Claus, like a great many other people, hates to be seen doing a good action, he is afraid of meeting human beings, so drives his reindeer through the air, stops on the top of houses, jumps down the chimney, fills all the stockings, and then hurries back again. If wakeful eyes are there to watch him, he will not stop a minute, but leaves the stockings empty. To those, who thinking of others, intrusted a double message to the snow-birds, Santa Claus brings sweet dreams and happy wakening thoughts besides the usual share of gifts. He kisses those children on the cheek and promises them the brightest Xmas of all.

Quickly he drives over the hearts of many of the great cities. It makes him sad to see so many weary faces and to find no stockings awaiting him. Still, sadder does he feel, to know he has nothing for them. Now and then in pity for some disappointed face he catches up the owner for a drive with him. She shivers at first, but the northern lights, those guardian angels of Arctic regions, wave and beckon to their heavenly home, and the child, smiling sweetly, falls asleep with her head on Santa Claus' shoulders.

But hark! Those angels in their gleaming robes comprise a glorious host enveloping the whole firmament, and as in the days of that first Christmas, the heavens resound with the grand old anthem:

"Glory to God in the Highest,
On earth, peace, goodwill to men."

—M. E. A.