

And what do we read about Christ's return in the Gospel of St. Matthew? "This gospel of the kingdom," said Christ to His disciples, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come."

God knows, of course, the very day and hour of the second advent, and yet that does not alter the fact that He has appointed us His agents for "preparing the way of the Lord." Dean Alford translates II. Peter, iii, 12, *urging onward, hastening*, the coming of Christ; but whether that translation be accepted or not, we are surely speaking in the spirit of Holy Scripture when we say with one of our best expositors, "That by praying for His coming, furthering the preaching of the Gospel, and bringing in those whom the long-suffering of God is waiting to save", we are truly hastening the return of our Lord and Master.

And now I have only touched the border of this wide and important subject. One might go on, for instance, to speak of the thousand open doors which invite the Gospel to enter and bring peace and light; of the terrible destitution that still prevails in heathen lands; of the many promises which God has given to those who are willing to spend and be spent for the souls of others—such as that glorious promise in the Book of Daniel: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

There are numberless motives and encouragements to missionary effort, and even to name them would be more than I can do at present. There is just one more encouragement, however, that may well serve as a fitting conclusion to this very imperfect sketch, and that is *the reflex blessing* the missionary effort brings upon the soul. I know of no more powerful means of grace than that of striving and praying for the salvation of others. Some years ago I read somewhere of a clergyman who, at a certain period in his ministry, found a deplorable spiritual deadness amongst his people. In vain he warned, and pleaded, and exhorted. It seemed as if nothing could arouse them, nothing could impress them. At last one day he happened to be present at a certain missionary gathering where the claims of the heathen upon the Church of Christ were most plainly and forcibly presented, and as he listened this thought flashed upon him. "We have been thinking too much of ourselves, and too little of those who have never heard the Gospel." With that he went home, and at the next opportunity laid the whole matter plainly before his congregation, with the result that they decided to devote themselves more earnestly, as a church, to the work of foreign missions. And what do you think the clergyman said? "Almost at once it seemed as if God opened the windows of heaven and

poured out upon us such a spiritual blessing as had never been known in our history as a church." Such was his experience, and would be the experience of many others, if only they would follow a similar course.

Let any congregation devote itself earnestly and heartily to the work of spreading the Gospel and it is sure to be blessed; sure to realize sooner or later that, in the deepest and most real sense, "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

A MISSION TOUR IN ATHABASCA.

By the BISHOP OF ATHABASCA.

NO. I.



SOME account of the almost unknown country north of the Saskatchewan, in connection with the missionary work of the Church of England there, may be interesting to your readers.

Let the reader bear in mind that the section of country I am about to describe as our starting point is more than 1,000 miles north and west of Winnipeg, and it will serve to give him, or her, some idea of the vast extent of country cultivatable and already entered upon.

As the traveller starts northward from Edmonton, by what is known as the Athabasca trail, it is worth while to look back at intervals and enjoy the pleasant picture the far-stretching reach of country presents. Through the centre, though invisible to the spectator, flows the Saskatchewan River. The country is lightly wooded; that is, while the open land predominates, it is agreeably broken by isolated, well-developed trees, and by bluffs of poplar, cotton, birch, etc. Small sheets of water and swamps are frequent, affording good haygrounds, in strong contrast to the treeless plains through which the C.P.R. main line hurries its wearied passengers. When I first passed over this road in 1884, and for some years subsequent, the trail took the most direct and convenient route, and meandered at its own sweet will over the solitary land. Now the fences of settlers, as though instinct with all the uppishness of a new order, rudely shoulder the old trail, now to the right and now to the left, regardless of the comfort and convenience of its wayfarers.

As some recompense, instead of gazing on a solitude, the houses of settlers can be seen in all directions, new trails are springing up, bands of sleek cattle wend their way homeward, or to favorite drinking or feeding grounds. At one point a creamery is already in operation; along the banks of the Sturgeon River there are already two cheese mills and a well-appointed sawmill.

There is an unbroken stretch of arable country to the Sturgeon River, some thirty miles north