

MISSION FIELD.

The Beginnings of Missionary Work in the West.

It was nearly 200 years after Columbus' arrival at the east shore of this great western continent, before anything was known of this far western country. But we find that as men did find their way west little by little, they were followed closely by missionaries of the Society of Jesus. In 1615, to quote Mr. Macoun, "Champlain ascended the Ottawa and crossing to Lake Nipissing, passed down French River to Lake Huron. While on this expedition he heard of Lake Superior, but it was twenty-six years after this before a Frenchman launched his canoe on the Great Lake. Two missionaries of the Society of Jesus reached the lake in 1641." Thus we find that just so far west as any settlement had gone, missionaries had, so far, followed close at their heels. In 1668 two French gentlemen, De Grosselier and Radison, demonstrated the existence of a water route from Lake Superior to Hudson's Bay by compassing Lake Superior, ascending the Kaministiquia and crossing the waters of the Rainy River, following it to the Lake of the Woods, and then following the Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg, thence descending the Nelson to Hudson's Bay. This is as nearly the first expedition to the west as history gives us, though it is possible others had preceded these Frenchmen. From this on, the Hudson's Bay company began establishing settlements and trading posts in many different parts of the west. Other trading companies were also formed and between these and the Hudson's Bay Co. trouble arose. It was in 1703 when the first H. B. post was opened on the Red River. About this time Lord Selkirk, by the purchase of shares, gained control of the H. B. Co. His right to the territory was disputed and much trouble arose; but he refused to give up his claim and all attempts to overthrow the company were futile.

But without entering further into the history of the country, we turn to more directly view our subject. The first settlers in Manitoba, viz., those brought into the country by Lord Selkirk, who was himself a Lowlander, were Highland Scotchmen and Presbyterians. With them, as Principal Grant has put it: "Religion was the principle of their lives, and their religion was inextricably bound up with the simple forms of the church of their fathers." They would not have left their mountains and glens for the prairies that, Lord Selkirk told them, were ready for the plough, in the heart of an unknown continent, had he not promised that a minister of their church would accompany them to their new home.

But it was found difficult to get a minister so a lay catechist, James Sutherland by name, was sent out and did faithful work, but was removed owing to the hostile influences of the North West Company. But these noble families of Highlanders were not without their Gaelic Bibles, and knew how, and what was better, loved to read them. They sang the plaintive Gaelic tunes to the Psalms of David and prayed as to a living God. No minister of their own having been yet sent out, in 1820 they welcomed the Rev. John West, a missionary of the Church of England. Much was done by him and other missionaries of the Church of England, (viz., Rev. D. T. Jones, Rev. Mr. Anderson (bishop) and Bishop Macbray, the latter two being Scotchmen,) to minister to the special wants of these Highlanders. But they never forget their own beloved church and still hoped for a minister of their own.

But at last the Church of Scotland, so long deaf to their cry, in 1852 sent the Rev. John Black to minister to them. Taking six weeks on the journey from Toronto to Winnipeg, via the States, he arrived and was welcomed and ever after loved by those sturdy Scotchmen, who, to the number of 800 left the Episcopal Church in one day, with no thought of reproach on the part of its Bishop and with only feelings of gratitude to him. A manse, school and stone church were at once erected, and as the mason gazed on the finished solid structure he exclaimed, "There! keep pouther and ill hands aff her, and she'll stand for a hunner years and mair!"

For fifteen years more nothing was done by the Presbyterian Church for the North West. Rev. Mr. Black was, to use Principal Grant's words again, "Bishop and Presbyter." The settlement grew and in 1871 was erected the first Manitoba College beside the Kildonan Church. But the most earnest early missionary work in the North-West was done by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, and while the Scotch Church delayed about sending anyone to minister to her own people, these other churches were working away faithfully among not only English speaking people, but half-breeds and Indians as well, along the Red River and North as far as Hudson's Bay and on the Mackenzie River, where they built churches and schools and found many of their young men ready to teach, even without remunera-

tion in many cases. Thus the Church of England especially, gained a great foothold in the far north, and it is a fact not at all to the credit of our own Presbyterian Church, which we all love better than any other, that places are even to-day to be found where laborers of the Anglican persuasion are faithfully discharging their duties, while no Presbyterian has found his way to them as yet as a preacher of the Gospel. This is true in some of the Indian settlements near James Bay, as I was informed last winter by some who have spent the best part of their lives in these settlements in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company; and by one man especially who is a strong Scotchman, and endured the Anglican form of worship all these years until recently, under protest. Of course it may now be as well for our church not to interfere. But we turn now to the Roman Catholics and we find that, as usual, they were not far behind the first in performing missionary labor in their own way.

In an article written by the late Archbishop Tache's secretary, he says Lord Selkirk, anxious to attract to his colony the French Canadians dispersed throughout the country, took the necessary steps to secure the services of two priests; and the Rev. J. N. Provencher and Rev. S. Dumoulin were sent, one (the latter) was at a later date sent to Pembina, while the former remained in St. Boniface and was made its first bishop, where he remained until his death in June 1853. He sent missionaries to the Saskatchewan country, to Athabasca, to British Columbia and Oregon; so we may consider St. Boniface the headquarters of the great field extending north to the Arctic Ocean and west to the Pacific. Much self-denying and arduous toil was performed by devoted men in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in the early days of the North-West. And while we have a right as Presbyterians to hang our heads for work that might have been done in those days that was not done, yet we may not forget that when a Scotchman makes up his mind to do a thing it is made and he will do it or die in the attempt. This the Presbyterian Church is proving in these days of missionary enterprise; and that, together with the fact that as he believe we have, generally speaking, more spirit and less form than any other Christian body, and also the fact that in all things we make much of the sovereignty and control of God, and the futility of man's own efforts, is going to bring her yet to the front if she is not already there, and make her the most powerful factor, denominationally in the saving of souls, and in moulding the character of this great Western country.

Let us profit by the lessons of the past, and let us also ever remember that we have a grand and noble cause and that much responsibility rests upon us as Christian workers and as servants of God, for the maintenance of that cause and for allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us freely, that we may prove a power for good yet in the hands of an all-wise and all-powerful God, in the up building spiritually, of this as yet but young and virgin country, full of all the grandest possibilities if directed in right channels by those stationed in prominent places as her pilots, who labor in the service of the King.—A. E. CAMP, in *The Manitoba College Journal*.

Mission Notes.

St. Augustine, about 420, remarks that many Christians of his day thought that the coming of Christ was at hand, because, said they, the Gospel had now been preached in all the world. He reminds them how very far the Roman world is from being the whole actual world. There are, he remarks, many races, and even unknown races, to which the Gospel had not yet been preached, and to which God had not yet made it possible to preach it. "Even in the heart of our own Africa," says he, "how many tribes there are of which we have no knowledge, and to which we have no access!" How different the case now, as to the world at large, and as to Africa in particular!

The *Zeitschrift* happily remarks that the Buddhist imitation of the Sunday-school is just such a sign of the impending collapse of Buddhism in Japan, as Julian the Apostate's futile attempts to introduce Christian usages and institutions into his decaying paganism was a sign of his despair. Conscious imitation only succeeds when the principles are the same; otherwise it only hastens ruin.

A new hall has been opened in Florence, Italy, and after a month's experience the prospects are encouraging. Mr. Nathaniel A. Shaw, who is charged with the work, is now giving a series of historical lectures on the great reformers, "and these," he says, "are being listened to with the most rapt attention by large audiences." The entire expense of fitting up this hall has been met by a friend whose name Mr. Shaw is not at liberty to publish, but for whose generosity he thanks God and the donor.