

A CHARGE

DELIVERED to the Clergy of the Diocese of Toronto, at the Triennial Visitation, held in the Cathedral Church of St. James, Toronto, on the 6th June, 1844, by the Honourable and Right Reverend JOHN STRACHAN, D.D., Lord Bishop of Toronto.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN:

In meeting you in visitation for the second time, I can with great truth assure you that I am, at this moment, more sensible of the awful responsibility of my sacred office and my insufficiency fully to discharge its important duties than I was at the first. I have nevertheless had many things to encourage and support me in the exercise of my duty, and amongst others the well-grounded hope that notwithstanding my deficiencies, I should be sustained by the labours, the prayers, and affection of you, my Brethren, with most of whom I have lived so long on terms of paternal and cordial friendship, and I have not been disappointed.

I have been deeply affected with the kind reception which I have everywhere met with in my various travels; the more especially because I am persuaded that the respect introduced was paid not so much to my person as to my office, the duties of which I have sought to discharge with all the regularity, temper, and impartiality in my power; and it would be a matter of sincere regret to me if, during the period that I have presided over this Diocese, I should have done anything unkindly or unjustly in any cases of discipline and difficulty which may have occurred; and should any such case be pointed out, I shall rejoice in setting it to rights.

The more early part of the summer of 1842 I spent in establishing throughout the Diocese branches of the Church Society, and on the 19th of July I proceeded to visit the Indians on the Manitouawing Island and at the Sault Ste. Marie, and returned by St. Joseph, Michillimackinac and the River St. Clair. At the latter place I landed and visited all the Missions west of Toronto, and reached home on the 3rd of October; having consecrated during my journey two Churches and one burial ground,—confirmed 756 persons at 24 different stations,—and travelled by land and water about 2500 miles. During the whole of this long journey, God, in His mercy, blessed me with excellent health, inasmuch that I was never prevented from keeping my appointments with punctuality, and discharging every duty that awaited me.

My journeyings during last summer commenced on the 10th of June and ended on the 21st of October. I visited the Niagara and Home Districts, those of Simcoe, Colborne, Newcastle, Victoria, Prince Edward, Midland, Eastern, Bathurst and Dalhousie. My travels were not quite so extensive as those of the former year, but there was much more actual duty to be performed. The Confirmations at seventy-eight stations were 2923,—Churches consecrated five, and burial grounds two,—Sermons and Addresses delivered 155,—miles travelled about 2277.

In October 1839 when I returned from England to take charge of this Diocese the number of the Clergy was 71, they have since increased to 103. Many changes and casualties have, in the meantime, taken place. Some have removed, to employ themselves in other portions of the Lord's Vineyard, and a few have been called to give an account of their stewardship, and, it is hoped, to receive a blessed reward.

In my first progress through the Diocese in 1840, the number confirmed was 1790. During my second, this number was more than doubled, the aggregate being 3901, and had I been able to reach six or seven places which I hope to visit during this summer, my confirmations would have somewhat exceeded four thousand.

This increase, my Reverend Brethren, is very encouraging, as it manifests your zeal and devotion to your arduous duties, while it leads me to hope that if it please God to spare me to make a third Visitation round the diocese, the increase will still be greater.

I am truly grateful for the consideration and substantial kindness which I everywhere experienced from you and the Laity, and I was delighted to witness your active and untiring devotion to your labours, as their fruits were shewn in your increasing congregations and the numerous candidates presented for confirmation. I found many of you working beyond your strength, and to some I judged it necessary to suggest the propriety of regulating their exertions by a due regard to the continuance of their health. From a review, therefore, of my Visitation and its results, I have abundant reason to be thankful to the blessed Head of the Church, and earnestly to pray for the continuance of His presence.

II. In regard to our Indian Missions, we have also reason to be grateful. They may be all considered prosperous in proportion to the time which has been employed in their formation and instruction. The Six Nation Indians on the Grand River, and in the Bay of Quinte, continue to make good progress under the careful and unwearied teaching of their three diligent and pious missionaries. At Muncey Town on the River Thames, the Indians are much improved under the judicious and able management of the Rev. Richard Flood, who notwithstanding his Mission at Delaware, continues to devote to them a large portion of his time. At Walpole Island we cannot be said to be yet fully organized; but we still look forward in hope.

With what I saw of the Indians on the River Sable, I was much pleased. I found them very industrious and intelligent, and cultivating a tract of land which they had purchased from the Canada Company, and with so much success as amply to supply their simple wants. They were exceedingly anxious to have a Clergyman and schoolmaster settled among them, and promise every assistance that it may be in their power to give. Through the kind interference of the Diocesan Church Society I have been enabled to place a School-master among them, who has been already of great use, and appears to be a person worthy of confidence. I have not yet sent them a Clergyman, nor do I know when I may be able, as we have so many other places whose claims are still greater. But they have not been altogether neglected; for the Rev. Mr. Pine, notwithstanding his many stations and onerous duties, has made them several visits to their great joy and comfort.

There is not within the Diocese a more interesting Indian settlement than that of the Sable. The Chiefs and People exhibit so much good sense and such a desire for religious instruction, and at the same time are so humble and sober in their expectations, and so grateful, that it is a pleasure to have communication with them and to shew them favour.

The Church mission on the Manitouawing Island is in a prosperous state, and were it made the interest of the Indian families scattered along the shores of Lakes Huron and Superior to congregate and settle there, and were the church, so long promised, built, it would be productive of the most salutary effects. Already the Indians have acquired more correct ideas concerning marriage,—a strong desire to have their children educated like the whites,—a disposition to raise the condition of their women,—to abjure idolatry, their Prophets, and the medicine-bag,—and a growing sense of the sinfulness of murder, drunkenness, implacable enmity, and revenge.

The religious instruction and civilization of the Indians must go hand in hand; or rather they must be incorporated as it were with each other. Many years ago I drew up a plan, at the desire of His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland, for the conversion and civilization of all the Indians within the Province of Upper Canada, upon which he was beginning to act when promoted to the government of Nova Scotia. Some little has been done by Government since, and as much by the Church as she was able; but the times have not been propitious. On this important subject I might enlarge with advantage; but I have so many other topics to which to advert, that I shall content myself with two general observations:

1. All the different tribes of Indians whom I met, heathen as well as christian, appeared fully aware that the time was rapidly approaching when they must alter their mode of life. Hunting has become exceedingly precarious: the wild animals along the shores of the Lakes and even in the interior, are extremely scarce or rather nearly extirpated: fish, though generally abundant in the Lakes, fails at certain seasons; and the superior comfort of the Indians already settled, and of the few whites who are permitted to remain among them as artisans, has not been unobserved. But their disposition to rove and not to remain in one place, continues to prevail. They have a great antipathy to steady labour or occupation, although not now insensible to the benefits it confers. It is nevertheless a great advance, that they have become convinced of the greater comfort of fixed habitations. Their reason is now with us, though their habits remain against us; and therefore these habits should be our principal object of attack: not perhaps openly and still less in an overbearing spirit, but gently, cautiously, and by degrees. It is a forward step to persuade them to continue in one place a portion of the year, and during that time much may be done, in a variety of ways, to weaken their wandering habits. The general impression which they now feel that they cannot live much longer as formerly, proves that the time has come for the Church to put forth all her energies to bring them to Christ, and I trust the government will not be slack in granting us substantial assistance.

2. The Indians are all anxious to have their children educated, and are not unwilling to leave them in the Missionary settlement, if they can be supported while they themselves are absent on their hunting expeditions. These children are found as apt to learn as those of the whites, and acquire the common branches of instruction and expertness in the mechanical arts with equal facility. There is an excellent School of Industry for Boys and Girls at the Mohawk Village on the Grand River. The Boys are taught useful trades, and the girls knitting and sewing and household work. At the same time, their religious education is carefully followed up. They are found to be docile and quick of apprehension, and very soon become clean and tidy in their persons. Here again is a great advance, if diligently improved, towards the conversion of the Indians. The Church can reach the parents through the children; and even should she be less successful with the adults, she can gradually get possession of the rising generation, and, in half an age, the tribe becomes christian.

III. But while I saw much to call forth our thanksgivings to Almighty God in passing through the Province, from beholding the vigorous progress of the Church wherever Diocese in some degree she found an opening,—the Congregations that were forming in all directions,—and Churches, of a simple and cheap structure, that were rising in every district,—there is another aspect which the Diocese presents of a far different character, and in which it exhibits, I must in sorrow confess, a melancholy picture.

In this view, the map of the Diocese of Toronto, notwithstanding what has been done, presents an appalling degree of spiritual destitution. To the District of Ottawa, comprising nine townships, or more than a thousand square miles, I have not yet been able to send a single resident Clergyman. In the Wellington and Victoria districts, each containing twelve townships,—in all, nearly three thousand square miles,—we have only two Clergymen. In other directions large portions of the country remain entirely without Gospel privileges, and have never seen the face of a single Clergyman. Some again are visited occasionally by a travelling Missionary or the nearest resident Clergyman; but such visits are from necessity very rare and at long intervals. Even in the more early settlements, the Clergy reside at a great distance from one another, and a large addition to their number is required to afford any thing like the regular ministrations of the Church in the neighbourhoods which are the most favoured. We daily meet with Settlers who tell us in deep sorrow that they have never heard Divine service since they came to the country; or if it chance that a travelling Missionary makes his appearance, he is a stranger whom they may never see again, and whom they cannot send for in the hour of misfortune, or of death. In fine, nothing happens for months, nay for years, in many of our townships, to remind the Inhabitants of the existence of the Church of God.

Moreover our people are so dispersed over the whole face of the Colony, that where there is no town, or where the population is not dense, it is very difficult to collect a tolerable Congregation,—the individuals have so far to come, and the roads are generally so bad.

By the last Census, the Members of the Church are allowed to be 128,897, out of 496,055, the whole population of Canada West,—or little more than one fourth, spread over a Country nearly equal to Great Britain. I say allowed, because we have good reason to believe that the number is much below the truth. Many of the persons employed to take the population, are hostile to the Church of England, and delight in diminishing her numbers. I am therefore disposed to think, from observation, and the returns of certain places known to be correct, that our people are nearer one-third than one-fourth of the population of the Diocese. They are, nevertheless, as we have already remarked, so dispersed as to render it exceedingly difficult to supply them with religious instruction, unless we had many more Clergymen than would be sufficient were they concentrated. Our people are not only thus dispersed over a vast surface, but they labour under the further disadvantage of being mixed up with hostile sects, and hence many of them never having witnessed the ministrations of the Church, fall away to the Dissenters rather than attend to no divine worship. It is, indeed, true that numbers of them return when a Clergyman is sent to reside among them. But the delay, which is frequently long, is attended with the most pernicious effects; for although many continue long to cherish their attachment for the Church, and perhaps always lean towards her, yet their Children, never having beheld the Church in the beauty and holiness of her worship, and hearing her every day spoken against, are in great danger of being entirely lost.

Having only a portion of the population and very few Clergymen, we are unable to proceed in a very systematic and orderly manner. Instead of a small compact Parish, our Missionaries, with a very few exceptions, have a number of separate stations many miles asunder, and some of them several townships, each of which, if full of people, would make fifteen or twenty English parishes. All, therefore, that we can do to contract the sphere of their labours, is, to place a Clergyman between every two, as opportunity offers, and to follow up the same process, until, in the end we reduce the space and population to something like a parish which one Minister may superintend. Such, indeed, is the process which we have in progress: it must of necessity be slow in operation, and many generations will I fear pass away before it can be fully accomplished; but it is God's work, and, in His good time, He will render it effectual to the evangelizing of the whole province.

It has always appeared to me that we are opposed by greater difficulties in restoring a Colony like this to the true faith, than many of the Missionary Bishops in former times had to encounter in converting the Heathen. It is manifest that we have not the benefit of several causes which operated much in their favour. In former ages when the Missionary Bishop and his Clergy came among the Heathen, they gradually extended their boundaries on every side of their first settlement. So soon as the space was too large on account of population and distance to make it convenient for all to assemble, it was divided into districts or parishes, in such a manner that each might contain a population not too numerous for one Clergyman to superintend, and become acquainted with. In this way were Parishes and Dioceses parcelled out till they met

other Parishes and Dioceses. In all this the Bishop was greatly assisted, in the first place, by large Proprietors, for in general each Parish took the form of an Estate. A Proprietor, when converted, proposed to the Bishop to build a Church, and promised to furnish adequate support to a Clergyman to instruct himself and his people, provided the power was conceded to him of selecting one from among the Clergy whom the Bishop deemed qualified for the charge. Hence the origin of lay-patronage, which rapidly contributed to the establishment and extension of the Church. In this way religious instruction was provided for the people by those who were able to defray the expense attending it. Proprietor after proprietor followed this example, till the whole Province or Kingdom became divided into Parishes or Dioceses, and thus gave rise to national establishments. But in this Colony we have few such Proprietors, and, if we had, it is to be feared that the sublime motives to Christian generosity in contributing for religious purposes, and which, in primitive times, afforded the brightest proofs of fervent piety and disinterested zeal, have become comparatively cold and lifeless. Again, in those times the people were in perfect unity among themselves; they were all of one mind, docile and obedient to the Church. But this harmony has long passed away, and the demon of discord has arisen in its stead, to distract the Christian world and rend it into ten thousand fragments; and with such terrible effect has it already done this, that the Holy Catholic Church for which Christ died, is to thousands amongst us calling themselves Christians, the object of implacable hatred. Of this we have daily experience; for the position of the Branch of this Church established among us, has for many years been that of bitter persecution from Dissenters of all denominations. They hold her up to public reprobation, and, agreeing in nothing else, join heart and hand in their enmity to the Church of England, exclaiming in the words and spirit of the enemies of Jerusalem, "Down with her, down with her even to the ground!" We are the "Sect every where spoken against," and in slandering us and our principles, and in any manner injuring our religious efforts, they think that they are doing God service. And yet it is our duty not only to retain those who are already of us, however indifferent, but to bring back these our enemies into the fold. For in all the British Colonies, we are alone entitled, as holding the divine Commission and as the Clergy of the national Church, to be their Teachers, Guides, and Directors in spiritual things. Nor does it alter the matter that they refuse obedience and resist our authority. The right is not the less; nor can we, without sin, neglect to exercise it whenever it can be done with any prospect of success. And although in enforcing such right in this momentous case, we should proceed with all gentleness and discretion, it must never be compromised or relinquished. You behold, then, that our difficulties are even greater than many of the first Propagators of the Gospel had to surmount, and our prospects are in some respects more gloomy and discouraging, and had we merely the arm of flesh on our side, they would be altogether insurmountable. But we must not fear, for they that be with us are more than they that be against us; and though the mercenary spirit of the age, in addition to all other impediments, seems to be eating out of the heart of society all that is generous and noble, and substituting sordid and earthly for heavenly things, we are not to despond, but, on the contrary, the more our difficulties increase, the more should our zeal for the honour of God and our Redeemer increase, and the more boldly ought we to trust to the word of prophecy, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Such is the spiritual destitution of this Diocese, and such the enemies which we have to encounter. And what means have we to remedy the one, and to vanquish the other? We have, first, the promise of inspiration that our Redeemer must reign till he hath put all things under his feet; but as God employs human instruments in bringing out his purposes, let us briefly revert to the means which we possess, which, under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, may in time bring all within our reach into captivity to Christ.

IV. It is of advantage, in contending with difficulties, to be thoroughly aware of their magnitude and extent, and therefore if we add to the gloomy picture which this view of the Diocese presents, the fact that its spiritual destitution will increase faster, notwithstanding our utmost exertions, than we can supply the remedy, till the settlement of the whole Colony is completed, we become acquainted with the greatness and limit of the evil. Now it is a great consolation to think that if nothing had been done, this evil, formidable as it is, would have been far greater; and as we have, by the means in our hands, done something, the same means, judiciously employed in faith, will still continue to prosper and do more. Among these means, the first in place, are the great Church Societies and other religious Associations in England. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has done much for us by her generous donations of Books and munificent grants towards building our Churches, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel has been the principal source of the maintenance of our Clergy. And notwithstanding the severe pressure of the times, it is now doing more than ever for our spiritual welfare, and at this moment supports half our Missionaries. These magnificent Institutions have been the great instruments under Divine Providence of planting and fostering our Church, not only in this but in all the other Colonies of the British Empire.

What would a Bishop of Upper Canada be but for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel? What could he do for the advancement of Christianity in his Diocese, were there any falling off in her resources to cripple her energies, or compel her to withdraw a portion of her bounty? Indeed I may with truth say, what would become of the Colonial Church, should the means of this noble Institution be diminished? Our wants are increasing much faster than she is able to meet them, notwithstanding her generous and open hand. She is the great Almoner of the Church of England, and wisely does she distribute what is entrusted to her care. And yet if she be the Almoner of the Church in regard to the Colonial possessions of the Empire, what shall we say to the members of that Church who leave her without the means of satisfying even a portion of the claims which are humbly sent to her from the Colonies for relief? This Colony, for instance, may be considered the great receptacle of the surplus population of Great Britain and Ireland for the last twenty years, and must continue to be so for many years to come. Let us suppose that during the past it has relieved the parent state of two hundred thousand souls, chiefly paupers, and taking five for a family, 40,000 families. Now it is matter of fact that most of those families were more or less upon their parishes before they came out. Let us take 4/4 as the average charge of each family upon the poor-rate, (and the far greater number would be double or treble that amount,) and the saving to the mother country even at this low average, would be 160,000L per annum; and yet in return for this vast saving, what do we behold? Why the Society, although giving to the utmost of her power, unable to grant to this great Colony more than six or seven thousand pounds per annum, or less than one-eighteenth of the sum annually saved to the mother country! What renders this matter the more distressing is, that Dissent, to promote its evil purposes, contributes ten times more in proportion than the sons and daughters of the Church. The Wesleyans, for example, who do not number one-sixteenth part of the Church, contribute for Missionary purposes, more than one hundred thousand pounds per annum, while the oldest Protestant Missionary Society in the world, the dispenser of the bounty of the Church of England, numbering amongst its contributors sixteen-twentieths of the people, and embracing a still greater proportion of the national

wealth, receives much less than one-half of that sum. What can be the cause of this strange apathy,—this neglect of the most sacred of all causes? Were the hearts of Churchmen in the right place, instead of so small a sum as thirty or forty thousand, more than three hundred thousand pounds per annum would flow into the treasury of the Society, to spread the blessings of the Church through all the Colonies. And richly do they deserve this, and much more, since they are daily relieving the parent state from a far greater burthen and expense. Nor is this all. The paupers thus exiled, instead of continuing as thousands would have done, a burthen on the community, have become useful members of Society. But I cannot believe that the necessities of the Church in the Colonies, and her just claims, have been yet fully brought before the people in England, or they would not fail to respond in a measure beyond such necessities. Already the generous disposition of former times appears to be awakening in a few bosoms, and some indications of great promise have been recently manifested.

Nor has the help which we have received been confined to the two great Societies; for the Upper Canada Committee have for many years supported several Missionaries in this Diocese. And I have great satisfaction in stating that they have been fortunate in the gentlemen selected, who have proved pious and laborious, and devoted to their work. It is to be lamented that this Institution, from the drying up of its resources, has been compelled to contract the extent of its exertions, at a time when we so much require additional help.

Of the Rev. Mr. Waddelove, who takes upon him the whole charge of the Stewart Missions, it is not easy for me to speak in adequate terms of affection and esteem. There is perhaps no individual now living, to whom this Diocese is so much indebted as to this faithful and devoted servant of Christ.

Of the manifold exertions of the New England Society in favour of the Six Nations, I have spoken at some length in the journal of my Visitations which has been printed and circulated in England at the expense of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The liberal measures taken by the New England Society for the temporal and spiritual amelioration of the Indians, reflects upon them the greatest credit. They grant a comfortable support to two able and pious Missionaries; they defray the expense of a large and promising School of Industry for Indian boys and girls, and in many other ways aid in raising the condition of the Mohawk Tribes.

These different sources of aid to this Diocese ought to be known and appreciated; for without them, what a frightful scene of moral and spiritual destitution would it have now exhibited!

V. Among the events interesting to the Diocese which have occurred since we last met, the establishment of the Church Society on the 28th April 1842, is the most prominent. It is a day ever to be held in remembrance by us, Society, and I trust by our posterity through many generations, as a signal epoch in the history of this branch of the Catholic Church. This Institution has not only spread its branches through all the districts of the Diocese, but it has already been established in most of our Parishes, and will in a very short time embrace them all. It gives unity of action to the operations of the Church; it unfolds and concentrates her resources; and by bringing the Clergy and Laity more together to promote objects in which they cordially agree, it promises the most happy results. It opens a field of action for the best and holiest energies of our people, and by their wise and judicious combination, warrants us in expecting the greatest benefits in the extension and better support of the Church. The time had indeed come when something was expected from the Church of the Colony. From recent accounts we had learned that the great Societies were, from various causes, unable to extend their assistance, and as their fostering care had been so long continued, a hope, by no means unreasonable, had arisen that we would now endeavour to do something for ourselves. This became to us an additional motive to consider what was possible for us to do within the Diocese, not to supersede but to give supplementary assistance to what the Government and the different Institutions were doing in its behalf. Not that our people had failed at any time to manifest their deep reverence for the Church of their Fathers, and to give every assistance in their power; but till lately they were so poor, so few in number, and struggling in the midst of the vast forest in single families, that it was impossible to combine their efforts so as to produce any considerable result. Things have, at length, assumed a more favourable appearance: our towns are growing populous, our settlements becoming extensive, and our farmers in many Districts getting more than comfortable; the time, therefore, had come when an attempt should be made to enlist every individual member of the Church, however small his ability, into our body.—Hence the origin of the "Church Society." It presents a machinery which associates every member of the Church throughout the Diocese, and gives a value and importance not only to the smallest congregation, but to every individual of which it is composed. It makes known the wants and capabilities of every locality; and coming home to every family, it calls forth their sympathies and affections in favour of the Gospel. It brings neighbour to reason with neighbour on subjects of religion, and places forcibly before them as immortal beings an obligation which becomes irresistible when duly and earnestly weighed, of doing all they can to extend to the whole population of the Province that knowledge of salvation which is our most precious treasure.

Taking the many important objects of the Society into consideration, the support it has received has been great, and much more than if its objects had been fewer. Some see the necessity of promoting this or that object, who do not feel an equal interest in them all. This is very natural, and what we had reason to anticipate; yet they are all so intimately connected, and so necessary to the complete instruction of the child as well as the adult in Christ, that we cannot omit the one without in some degree marring the whole.

Already we have employed one Travelling Missionary, and preparations are making to employ four more; and we have good reason to hope that all the District Branches will very shortly engage at least one such Missionary. In the present deficiency of religious instruction in the Diocese, this is the most effectual and judicious measure, as a first step in our power to take, for collecting our scattered sheep and retaining the recent emigrant within the fold. The Travelling Missionary if zealous, with discretion, can make many beneficial arrangements for keeping up and extending among the people a reverent sense of religion. It is in his power, as the settlements advance in population, to establish Sunday Schools; to form depositories for books, to grow in time into Lending Libraries; and in the interval of his visits he can select some one of the teachers whom he may find best qualified to gather the people together on Sunday to read the Service and a printed sermon. Such arrangements would interest and employ the inhabitants of every neighbourhood in a profitable manner, and the principles of our holy religion as dispensed by the Church, would be kept alive. And should any coldness, relaxation, or falling away be discovered, the return of the Missionary would revive the right spirit, and set all things in order. Missionaries having a whole District or perhaps several Districts to visit, will find it more profitable to remain at a populous station for some space of time, even a month or six weeks, instead of hastening from place to place. During this period they can become acquainted with all the families of the neighbourhood: the services of the Church can be explained and vindicated, and the favourable impressions, made by friendly conversation, can be confirmed by preaching: a small congregation can be organized: the number of children ascertained, and a Sunday School set on foot. In this way the teaching of the Church will make a favourable impression