

PRESBYTERIANISM.

WHAT IT HAS DONE AND WHAT IT MAY DO IN THE NORTHWEST.

The following interesting review of the work of the Church, by Rev. Prof. Bryce, LL.D., First Moderator of Synod, was delivered before the Synod of Manitoba on Wednesday evening, 16th July, 1884, on the texts:—

Heb. XIII: 7.—“Remember them which had the rule over you [revised version], who spoke to you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day and forever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.”

2 Tim. IV: 2.—“Preach the word: be instant [press on—Alford] in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.”

Presbyterians are very sensitive as to anything approaching man-worship. Their fundamental conception of God is so grand that man is hidden in the blaze of God's glory. And yet the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews feels at liberty to employ the great cloud of Christian witnesses named in Hebrews XI, and their heroic deeds, as incentives to us toward noble action. In the first passage before us, also, he uses the memory of the departed fathers of the church to incite the Hebrew Christians to faithful effort. This evening, appointed as I have been by the General Assembly, and chosen by the Synod itself, to open this Synod,—the first in the Northwest,—I feel as if I occupied the place rightly belonging to one called away from us, and now, we trust, a member of the General Assembly and church of the First-Born in heaven—I mean the late Rev. Dr. Black. It seems appropriate that in opening this new synod, I should refer to the faith and sacrifices of those who were our church's first missionaries, rulers and patterns of excellence in the Northwest.

Though our ecclesiastical history has not been continuous it begins with the earliest attempt at settlement in the Northwest—the Selkirk Colony. The first colonial missionary of any of the churches to Rupert's Land was James

Sutherland, an elder authorized by the Church of Scotland to baptize and marry, who came to the Red River in 1815. A colony of Highlanders without a religious teacher would be an anomaly. The fervor of the Highland nature will enable it to endure scanty food, the privations of war, persecution or poverty uncomplainingly, but not the want of religious worship. The colonists' agreement with Lord Selkirk included four things. 1. To have the services of a minister of their own church; 2. One hundred acres of land on certain conditions; 3. A market for their produce in the colony; 4. All the privileges of British subjects.

Their first condition was a religious one. Years came and went but their minister did not come. Mr. Sutherland for three years performed the duties of his office, until, in the conflict between the rival fur companies, he was forcibly taken away by the Nor'-West Company in 1818. He left a fragrant memory behind him, for as one said, “Of all men, clergymen or others, that ever entered this country, none stood higher in the estimation of the settlers, both for sterling piety and Christian conduct than Mr. Sutherland.” Mr. Sutherland was not a college-bred man, but if the two be separated, a basis of piety is a better foundation for any church than mere learning.

It was in 1817 that Lord Selkirk visited his colony here. A member of the Church of Scotland, as his son (the present Earl) is a member and elder of the same, he sympathized with the people in their desire to have a minister of their own faith. Standing on the lots where now St. John's Cathedral and College are, surrounded by the colonists, Lord Selkirk said, “These two lots I intend granting, the former for your church, as you have already formed a churchyard on it, and the latter for your school.” On being reminded of the condition to provide a minister, their patron again promised it, saying, “Selkirk never forfeited his word.”