

MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

LABRADOR.

(From the October Quarterly Paper, published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.)

This remote country is separated from England by four thousand miles of water. It may be said to be precisely opposite to the British Islands, being situated within the same degrees of latitude which include Great Britain and Ireland. Although it has been formally recognised as a part of the British empire for nearly two hundred years (since 1668), yet the spiritual ministrations of the British Church were unknown to its inhabitants until the autumn of 1848, when it was visited by that truly Missionary pastor, Bishop Feild, of Newfoundland.

The Esquimaux were in the undisturbed possession of it when it was discovered by the famous navigator, John Cabot, in 1497. In 1610, it was again visited by Henry Hudson, when he sailed through the Straits and into the Bay which are still called by his name, in that fatal voyage from which he never came back. The French at that time occupied Canada; and their fur-merchants carried on a trade with the natives in the neighbourhood of Hudson's Bay. This traffic, in the course of time, opened a way for the propagation of the Christian religion. French priests occasionally appeared amongst those natives who were in the habit of intercourse with the French merchants; and many were admitted into the Romish Church. In the year 1770, some Moravian Missionaries, who had been established since 1733 in Greenland, settled on the coast of Labrador, 500 miles distant from Greenland, at a place to which they gave the name of Nain. A blessing has rested upon their zealous and persevering labours. They have now four Missionary stations at Nain, Okkak, Hopedale, and Hebron, lying between 300 and 600 miles north of Sandwich Bay; and reckon about 1,200 native converts and 500 communicants.

The early accounts of Labrador represented it as a most gloomy and inhospitable country, characterised by extreme barrenness of soil, and great severity of cold during winter, which lasted from September to June, the surface consisting chiefly of rocks on which nothing but mosses and lichens would grow; the soil in a few narrow valleys merely an imperfect peat earth, which gave nourishment to dwarf birch-trees, willows, and larches. However, the Straits of Belle Isle, which separated Labrador from Newfoundland, are but twelve miles across, and the Newfoundland merchants soon began to establish a very profitable fishery during the summer along the whole coast, nearly as far north as Sandwich Bay. The crews then learned to remain here during winter, and enjoy themselves in the pursuit of seals, and in trapping foxes and martins for their furs. And thus, by degrees, this part of the coast of La-

brador has become peopled by about 1,200 settled inhabitants, nearly all of whom profess to belong to the Church of England, besides about ten times as many visitors during the summer months.

Dr. Feild was consecrated Bishop of Newfoundland in 1844; and a munificent Clergyman, the Rev. Robert Eden, soon after presented him with a small schooner, named the *Hawk*, to be used in visiting the various parts of his too extensive diocese, where the sea is almost the only highway. In the autumn of 1848, the Bishop crossed over from Newfoundland, and examined the state of the whole coast, from Blanc Sablon (where the diocese of Quebec begins) up to Sandwich Bay, a length of 250 miles.

An extremely interesting account of his visitation has been published by the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." And about this time last year (1849), the Bishop repeated his visit, an account of which has also been printed. Immediately after his first voyage had made him acquainted with the spiritual destitution of the people, the Bishop conceived the design of planting three Missionary Clergymen on the coast, one at Forteau, a second at Battle Harbour, and a third at Sandwich Bay.—When he had written home, the Society, although its funds were then in a very exhausted state, engaged at once to contribute £200 per annum towards the support of these Clergymen, if the people themselves would provide the remainder. The Rev. Algernon Gifford was sent in 1849 as the first Missionary of the British Church in Labrador.—The Bishop, who accompanied him to his station and left him there, has written to the Society a most interesting account of this incident:—

"I feel that it is an occasion of thankfulness that I have been permitted to visit a second time that country, and to minister, however imperfectly, to the spiritual wants of its inhabitants. My last visitation did not extend so far north as that of 1848, but I spent as much time on the shore, and ministered in as many places. Our first place of call was, as on the former occasion, Forteau. It was here, as you are aware, that I determined, if God should prosper me, to settle our first Missionary—to settle him, I mean, as to his head-quarters and chief place of residence; for the Mission extends along forty miles of the shore on each side of the Straits of Belle Isle. My wish was so far gratified—I humbly trust, in answer to the prayers of the Church and my Christian friends and fellow-helpers (for all are fellow-helpers who pray for us)—that I was enabled to bring with me an exemplary young Deacon (Mr. Algernon Gifford), who had cheerfully devoted himself to the hardest and most laborious post I could assign him.

"My design seemed to be favoured in another respect. The only person on the whole shore, who was both able and willing to afford my young friend a decent lodging had just returned from Halifax in Nova Scotia, whither he had gone last year with his family to settle and educate

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