

## THE INDIANS OF MACKENZIE RIVER.

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**W**ORK amongst the Indians of the Diocese of Mackenzie River is very different from what one from home would expect. Probably the new comer expects to find savages gorgeous in war paint and feathers. He looks for bows and arrows slung around the shoulders, and is curious to have tales of Indian treachery or Indian warfare related to him. If he expects these things he will be disappointed. Most of the Indians he will see decently clad with the clothing provided in the shops of the Hudson's Bay Co. Rags in plenty he will meet with, but also gay youths in dashing shirts, brass-buttoned capotes, and jaunty beaded caps. Do these fine clothes indicate civilization? To a certain extent yes. And what is more, the Diocese of Mackenzie River is to a great extent a Christian land. We call England "Christian," but how many thousands of heathen hearts could be found there? But in this diocese every Indian, except the untaught Esquimaux, accepts the religion of Christ, but unfortunately not as taught in the way we of the Church of England, could wish. For the most part the Indians believe in the Roman Catholic religion.

At some forts along the river there are two separate missionary establishments. This one flies the Union Jack,—that yonder the three stripes of France,—a stranger in a strange land, subtilly teaching a religion adverse to real Gospel truth, and politics hardly coincident with British interests.

Does the Indian manifest much interest in religion? It is hard to answer yes to this question. When we speak to him in quiet he is glad, he says, to hear the Word of God, and in his heart he wishes to know the right way. But there his enthusiasm ends. You may sit in your house from New Year's to Christmas and never have the request voluntarily addressed to you—"Teach me of God?"

The missionary will ring the bell for daily evening prayers in the spring and fall, when the Indians are crowding at the Fort, and they will attend in fair numbers. But when trying to reach their motive, what is it? One cannot help thinking superstition has a good deal to do with it. It may be that their reasoning is this: "If I do not go to prayers, perhaps something will happen to me, so I had better go." And is this kind of thing confined to Indians alone? Let some at home answer. Yet the Lord is the Judge; if He sees the worshipper in spirit and in truth, him will He accept, and to his cry will He listen.

But all this seems to be written in a very despondent tone, and of a truth there are more encouraging spheres of work than that of which I

write. Nevertheless, a gleam or two of light is often seen of the precious metal. "Take my little girl," said a dying mother in the woods this spring to her friends, "to the minister when you reach the Fort, let him baptize her, and you take good care of her. Don't cry for me, it is no use to cry; only pray for me."

"I cannot read the Book," said a middle aged man, "but when I am lying down, I try to think of God in my heart, and wish I could know His way."

The great drawback to our missions is the unscrupulous teaching of the Roman Catholic priests. Medals and crucifixes and scapulas are given and sold off, and these are eagerly taken with the superstitious idea that by wearing them some dreadful evil will be kept off from them. "Come and confess your sins to me and I will make your heart white" (we might fancy it was the voice of God speaking, so momentous is the meaning of the words, and yet 'tis only a man!). In goes the devotee, is cross-examined as to the evil things he may have done (and thus taught more of sin than he knew before), and when the process is over has the formulæ said over him, and he fancies his heart is as white as the cleanest snow! But where is the sorrow for the sins done? Where the repentance? Where the resolution to go and sin no more? There seems to be little necessity for them in the scheme of doctrine taught by these teachers. Is it to be wondered at then that the deluded Indian yields to the tempting bait and sits at the feet of him who wields such power?

To the north, however, the Tukudh or Louch-eaux Indians are all members of our Church. And a very interesting and encouraging work is going on amongst them. But there are calls for work on the west side of the mountains, to the Indians between British Columbia and Alaska: these have no missionary, no teacher of the way to God. Christians of Canada, is it to be always so? The desire is to start a separate missionary effort for these heathen, with, if possible, a bishop at the head. If this is done promptly, energetically and in faith, many souls will be soon redeemed, please God, from sin, to walk and live in the peace which passeth knowledge.

THE Bishop of Bedford, who has the charge of East London, with all its squalor, is better known perhaps by his honored name, as Dr. Walsham How. His reason for declining the very important bishopric of Manchester, was because he had "no right to desert his present charge." Dr. How delights in telling how he became recognized in East London. First, he says, they pointed at me and said: "That's a bishop." Then, after a little time, it was, "That's *the* bishop." Now it is, "That's *our* bishop." He is indeed the East Enders' bishop—and friend too.