

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.—(Continued).

No 73—EARLY CANADIAN CHURCH.

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IN 1839 the Toronto Diocese was set apart from Montreal, and Archdeacon Strachan consecrated its first bishop; but having a bishop at Toronto did not help in the matter of missionaries, as Mr. Osler, finding his labours becoming too arduous for his strength, applied again and again for a clergyman to be sent to his help, the sad answer having always to be returned, "I have no one to send." Finally the bishop told Mr. Osler that if he would find and instruct the men, he would ordain and place them in charge of the congregations that were already gathered together. This Mr. Osler undertook to manage, and the parsonage at Tecumseth, being by this time (1839) nearly completed, another room was added, and six young men were, as they could be found, taken into the house to be prepared by Mr. Osler for the ministry. Wm. Stewart Darling, remembered by many for his labours in the parish of Holy Trinity, Toronto, was the first to come in, followed by A. W. Stuart, T. Champion, George Hill, G. Bourne and H. B. Osler; the latter well known to most of those in this part of the country as the present incumbent of York Mills. With one exception these young men were ordained by the Bishop of Toronto, and sent to take charge of townships in which they had worked as catechists, thereby extending the services of the Church still more widely.

Mr. Osler rode on an average from 100 to 150 miles each week, all the journeys having to be taken on horseback, over roads little better than cattle tracks extending through the woods for miles, without sight of house or clearing. In those days the clothing was all homespun, the women and girls having to spend all the time that could be spared from house and farm work at the spinning wheel or loom, and, while thus employed, the girls would fasten their Bibles to the frame, and commit to memory an amount of Scripture almost incredible; the boys, not wishing to be behind the girls, used to fasten a Testament to the handle of the plough, by this means ploughing and learning at the same time.

It is also mentioned in connection with the Sunday school, that many children regularly walked six or more miles to attend the school, and the same distance home. On June 7th, 1841, was held the first Sunday school picnic in Canada; about three hundred children came from various distances. Twenty-eight Sunday schools were at that time established, but, of course, many were too far away to allow of visitors from them. Each child brought his own cup, and the tea was composed of currant cakes, rhubarb pies, and two biscuits.

The country at that time was very full of

bears and wolves, and on one occasion when Mr. Osler was holding service at West Gwillamsbury, an alarm was raised that wolves were attacking the horses tied up by the fences. A general stampede ensued, the missionary having to run as well as his congregation after the flying horses, his own being amongst the number.

The Rev. C. B. Hill, who was the fourth missionary sent out by the Upper Canada Clergy Society, and appointed to the Grand River tract in the Niagara district, had been, during this time, working most zealously over a large amount of country. Services were held in schoolhouses, and farmers houses at stations in Glanford, Swamp Road, Seneca, York, Indiana, Cayuga, Dunnville, Shewan Settlement, Lake Erie Settlement, Camboro, McKenzie's Mills, all in a fifty mile circuit, and then another fifty miles would be taken in another direction, but missionary work was much hindered in 1837, and up to 1839, owing to the unsettled state of the country from the rebellion of 1837. Mr. Hill mentions in his report of 1840, that during the two years of real travelling missionary life, he had ridden over ten thousand miles, and preached fifteen hundred sermons. Mr. Hill was a very energetic walker, and most hard-working man; he sowed the seed of God's word thickly along the banks of the Grand River, and not until the last Great Day shall we know what the fruits of his labour will yield.

The Rev. A. Pyne was appointed to labour in Moore, Sarnia, Froomfield, etc. He mentions in 1844, being at Muncey Town to assist Mr. Flood at the funeral of an Indian chief, and that the Indian form of mourning was a circle of black ashes painted round the eyes, giving to their pale faces an exceedingly mournful effect. Sabel, Walpole Island, Maxwell, Windsor, were among the places visited by this missionary.

Mr. Morse was appointed to labour in Paris, St. George and Townships of Burford, Norwich and Durham, but this paper has already occupied too much space to enter more into detail as to his work.

The Rev. D. Blake, whose mission was in Adelaide upon the great road connecting Toronto with Lake Huron, laboured there with much diligence until transferred to Thornhill.

Of the labours of Rev. Mr. Gribble and Rev. Ralph Leeming, who came to the country in 1812 with many others, time does not permit me to speak. Their names are written in the Book of Life.

In conclusion I would hope that the consideration of the work accomplished by these pioneer missionaries, now nearly fifty years ago, may incite those of you who have so kindly listened to this little sketch, to renewed and greater exertions in assisting those of your countrymen less favoured in spiritual matters than yourselves.

In the dioceses of Ontario there are many places