

RED RIVER.

The following interesting extracts are from a letter by the Rev. John Black, published in the *Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record*; and which had been sent to the editor. We have, in previous number, referred to this mission. Our readers will remember that Mr. Black was sent last year, by the Free Church in this province, to undertake, for some time, this good work:—

RED RIVER, Dec. 17, 1851.

The Red-River Settlement, or, as it is called in legal documents, Assiniboine, is situated in the Hudson's Bay Territory, the centre point being about 97° West Longitude, and 50° North Latitude, and being about 70 miles north of the boundary line of the United States. The Red River, from which it derives its ordinary name, rises within the United States Territory, near the sources of the Mississippi, and, as to its general course, flowing nearly due north for between 300 and 400 miles, falls at last into Lake Winnipeg, the great central basin, where the waters of an immense extent of these northern regions are collected, and then discharge themselves by the Nelson River into Hudson's Bay. It is here a stream of considerable magnitude, and would be easily navigable by the smaller class of river steamboats. Vast plains, or prairies, of the richest soil, extend themselves in all directions, and form the most striking peculiarity of the country through which it flows. In summer, these prairies are covered with a luxuriant crop of grass. Wood, however, so essential an article in so cold a country, is rarely found, excepting on the banks of the river, or sometimes on rising bluffs or hillocks. In all these vast regions, capable of sustaining in abundance a population of millions, the only settlement, properly so called, is that of Red River, and the Indian population is scattered here and there.

The settlement has now a population of between 5000 and 6000 souls, and extends in length about fifty miles along the Red-River. The farms are narrow, each having a frontage on the river. The houses are close together, and remind you much of a *Cote* in Lower Canada. The land is fertile, the houses comfortable, and the settlers, generally, industrious and thrifty. The crops principally raised are spring wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, turnips, &c. They have plenty of horses, cattle, sheep, &c. There are eighteen wind and two water mills. The population, since it became a settling place for the retiring servants of the Company, has been slowly on the increase. About one-half of the population are Roman Catholics, the other Protestants. The former are mostly Canadians and half-breeds; they have a bishop and several priests and nuns. There is also a bishop of the Church of England, with four clergymen; there are three churches, in one of which the bishop himself regularly officiates, and one station; there is also an academy, which the bishop superintends. The Protestant part of the population were, however, with a very few exceptions, presbyterians originally, and had a minister been sent out, as was at first intended, they would have continued so still. The Church of Scotland has been guilty of a sad neglect, in regard to this colony. The original Sutherlandshire settlers have, almost to a man, remained true to their principles, and that in the face of the most powerful opposition. The Orkney men who have come in from the service with half-Indian families, have mostly fallen in with the Church of England, and, perhaps, in their circumstances, we are not to judge of them too severely—there was no other protestant church here.

A manse had been erected, which, however, has been converted into a temporary church, until a better can be built. It will accommodate perhaps 250 or 300 persons, and is always well filled, and with a most attentive auditory. We have service forenoon and afternoon, and also a lecture on Wednesday. We have a large and interesting Sabbath school, which existed before my arrival, but was not so fully attended. There are now ninety-six scholars, thirty-six of whom are young people in my own class. Finding, as I thought, that the congregation was pretty ripe for organization, I proceeded, with the help of a few of the heads of families, whom the people, at my request, appointed to aid me in the work, to examine and admit to the privilege of church membership, such as presented themselves with this desire; and the work having been deliberately brought to a close, we proceeded to the election of a staff of elders. Five worthy men were ordained to that office on Sabbath, 7th inst. Last Sabbath we had the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper dispensed among us. The number of communicants was 44. It was to all of us a solemn day, being the first time in which, according to our simple and scriptural form, that blessed ordinance was ever dispensed here. It was also the first time for the pastor who administered; the first time for the elders who served; and the first time for not a few who sat at the table—among others, two old men—the one 87 and the other 99 years of age; and all this in addition to its own intrinsic solemnity. I trust that the Lord was among us of a truth. We had the usual services before and after the dispensation of the ordinance.

Steps are now being taken to build a church. The stones are mostly quarried, and the most of them on the spot. The building is to be seated for nearly 400, and is to be fitted to receive galleries when required—thus leaving room for the increase of numbers which we may expect. The church is to be erected on a piece of ground long desecrated by the idolatrous revels of the Indians, and the Sabbath evening sports of some who bore a better name, but whose works were not much better than theirs. This piece of ground will be recollected by former residents on Red River, by the name of the Frog Plain.

Such is the present state of matters here. After a protracted and painful struggle of 36 long years, the faithful Pre-byterians of Red-River have seen their toils, in some measure, crowned with success. Their hearts have rejoiced in seeing their own beloved church fully organized among them. For this they feel that deep gratitude is due to the Giver of all good.

FRENCH CANADIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The Thirteenth Annual meeting of this important Society, was held in Montreal, on the 29th of January. The *Missionary Record* of the transactions of the Society, published occasionally, has been issued, containing the Annual Report, extracts from journals of Missionaries, &c.—We are sorry to say that the work goes on rather slowly. The opposition, we know, is very great, but still, with such a vast of missionaries, if they are all of the right stamp, as we hope they are, something more encouraging might be seen by this time. We are not expressing blame, but are certainly expressing disappointment. It has struck us more than once that, judging from their own reports, some of the *Colporteurs* are too disputatious, and on points which the *habitans* are less likely to feel, at any rate in the first instance, to be less influenced by. But though we say all this, we are warmly attached to the Mission, and most earnestly recommend it to the prayers and liberality of every section of the evangelical Church. We give the following extracts from the Report:—

The Colporteurs or Evangelists of this Society have visited systematically every parish in that part of the District which lies north of the St. Lawrence, in which a French population resides. There have been rescued, in a greater or less degree, from the superstitions of the Church of Rome, and introduced to a knowledge of saving truths as taught in the Word of God, upwards of four hundred individuals, including children; of whom it is believed that at least eighty have been savingly converted to Christ. These have either died in the faith of the gospel, or are now walking, in various localities, in the fear of the Lord. There have been more or less trained up in the Mission Schools, including those at present under instruction, 250 French Canadian young persons, whose whole destiny for this world and for eternity has been greatly affected by their connection with the schools. Large numbers of copies of the sacred Scriptures have been placed among the people, as well as many religious tracts and books. But there is every reason to expect, under the blessing of God, that the next five years will exhibit results vastly greater than the last thirteen years have produced.

Evangelization.—Persuaded that no agency, however excellent, is permitted by God to compete with this Divinely appointed institution, the Committee, while giving their attention to education and the circulation of the printed page, have not ceased to desire earnestly an increase of ministerial labour. During the whole year they have sought this increase, and they have now the satisfaction of welcoming to this work, the Rev. Philippe Wolff, who was formerly connected with our Mission under the auspices of the Foreign Evangelical Society, and who has just arrived, and will take charge of the station in this city. But the want is not yet supplied. Other devoted servants of Christ are needed; greatly needed.

During the past year only two ordained missionaries have laboured in connection with the Society, the Rev. J. E. Tanner, and the Rev. F. Doudiet. The former was in Europe during the greater part of the year, but, since his return, he has preached the word regularly every Lord's Day, either at Pointe Aux Trembles or to the congregation in Montreal, sustaining also the pastoral relation to the small churches in these places. Mr. Doudiet has continued throughout the year his labours in a wide circuit, extending over 50 or 60 miles in length, and comprehending in each locality visited, some families who know and love the truth as it is in Jesus.

Pointe Aux Trembles.—In addition to the educational department of the work, of which this place is the principal seat, and which will be described elsewhere, there has been carried forward a good work of evangelization. At Sabbath services in the College building, of which there are two and a Sabbath School, each Lord's day, certain of the surrounding population attend regularly or occasionally. The influence of the respected labourers at the Institute, has been felt for good among the people of the neighbourhood, notwithstanding the frequent denunciations hurled against them by the spiritual guides of the people. Two large families of eleven persons each, have abandoned the Romish communion, and have identified themselves with the congregation connected with the mission. Other parties are favourably disposed to the Mission, and to that saving truth which it is its design to diffuse; while it is manifest that a spirit of enquiry is awakened, which it will be impossible to allay and which it must be our aim to direct in its proper course. The congregation on the Lord's day, at present, numbers altogether, including the scholars, from 60 to 100 persons.

Montreal.—Divine service has been regularly conducted in this city, twice every Lord's day throughout the year, with an encouraging and increasing attendance. The Committee have now the pleasing prospect of