

A MISSION TO THE MAGDALENE ISLANDS.

BY THE REV. GEO. PATTERSON, D.D.

If I may judge of the information possessed by my readers about these islands, by what I possessed myself a year ago, I will be doing them no injustice in supposing that they have very indefinite ideas about them. It may be therefore proper to preface my narrative with some account of the islands themselves as well as their inhabitants.

The Magdalene Islands are situated nearly in the centre of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They stretch irregularly in a North-east and South-west direction between Lat. 47. 12 and 47. 51 N. and between Long. 61. 11, and 62. 15 W. They extend a distance of about 57 miles at their greatest length, and about 14 at their greatest breadth. The most southern point lies about 50 miles from the East Point of P. E. Island, about 60 from Cape North in Cape Breton, and 150 from Gaspe, while the most North-easterly point is only 70 miles from Cape Anguille in Newfoundland and 85 from the East Cape of Anticosti. They thus lie in the very track of the commerce of the Gulf and River St. Lawrence. Even vessels going by the Straits of Belleisle are driven toward them by unknown currents, so that they have been noted as a

SCENE OF SHIPWRECKS,

of many of which no survivor has been left to tell the tale. If Sable Island has been known as the graveyard of the Atlantic, with equal, if not greater appropriateness, may the Magdalenes be called the graveyard of the St. Lawrence Gulf. One can scarcely walk along their beaches, or look round the houses of the people, without seeing memorials of such sad events. In visiting a family I asked for a bible that I might have worship with them. They handed me an old one. On turning over the leaves I was struck with seeing so many verses marked in the margin with names of places and churches in England, and on turning to the front saw inscribed on it "E libris ———, 1814." I asked: "Where did you get this bible?" "Oh, it was sold here among some wrecked goods. It belonged to a minister in St. John who was going home to England." "Was he lost?" I enquired. "No; he had gone by another vessel from Quebec."

Such memorials, each doubtless linked with

SOME TALE OF SORROW, are to be found wherever one goes. Provision is made against their occurrence by light-houses on the most prominent points, and by a line of telegraph the whole length of the islands. But still shipwrecks are occurring. Only last autumn an Italian barque went ashore at the head of Pleasant Bay, when those on board supposed they were twenty miles distant from the islands.

It will be observed that it is in the same latitude as the southern counties of Newfoundland, the northern counties of New Brunswick, or the counties in the Province of Quebec, below the city. But its climate is cooler in summer and milder and more variable in winter than that of the two last and on the other hand more severe in winter and dryer and milder in summer than that of the first. It is almost entirely free from the fogs which prevail on our Atlantic coast. My experience of the summer is that the climate at that season is delightful, the fiercest heat of a July sun being tempered by an air from the surrounding waters. A medical gentleman whom I met, who had spent part of two summers there, spoke in the highest terms of its summer climate, and recommended it as just the place for those who wished to rest and recuperate. In winter the thermometer does not fall as low as in the Province of Quebec, but from the great dampness, the cold will be felt as keenly. Then all the harbors and bays are frozen over, and the islanders with their hardy ponies can easily pass from one island to another, the whole length of the group. This presents one of the principal inconveniences of the inhabitants. For nearly five months of the year they are shut out from all intercourse with the world except by telegraph.

On approaching the islands from any direction the first appearance they present is that of a range of rounded hills. As we draw nearer the outline becomes more distinct. They are generally hummocky in shape, sometimes forming a sharp cone, others having their tops rounded or flattened. Then one sees the steep cliffs of red, gray or brown freestone, or, it may be, light or dark gypsum, against which the waves beat with ceaseless roar and untiring energy. Then first as a dim haze on the horizon, but afterward more dis-