

FORWARD TO THE FRONT

hospitality, and during the delay Mr. Bompas continued busy "in the preparation," as he tells us, "of letters for the winter express, which is despatched hence to the south in December, and also in practising walking with snow-shoes, in preparation for my journey forward."

After he had remained at Fort Resolution about a month, "Mr. Lockhart kindly despatched him across the lake on snow-shoes, with two men and a sledge of dogs." Ice was found drifting in the open lake, and they were obliged to lengthen their course by following the shore very closely. "However, by God's help," wrote Mr. Bompas, "we arrived safely at the next post (Big Island) in five days, when I was again hospitably entertained by the officer in charge, Mr. Bird."

Here again he waited anxiously for the men from Fort Simpson with the winter packet of mail. They arrived on December 13, and four days later they started for Fort Simpson, and the missionary with them. Could they make the fort by Christmas Day? that was the question. Only a short time remained in which to do it. Day after day they sped forward. Saturday came, and still they were on the trail, and the next would be Christmas Day. One hundred and seventy-seven days had passed since leaving London, and was he to lose after all, and so very near his destination? But still the dogs raced forward, nearer and nearer, till, oh joy! on Christmas morning the fort hove into sight. There was the flag floating from its tall staff; there were the men crowding around to give their welcome, and among them stood that dauntless pioneer, the Rev. W. W. Kirkby, with great surprise on his face, as Mr. Bompas rushed forward and seized him by the hand.

Great was Mr. Bompas's delight in having accomplished the journey, and reached the fort on that blessed day in time for the morning service, and thankfully he wrote: