

Baptist Mission Work Among Foreigners in Manitoba and the Northwest.

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A very interesting and instructive book might be written on this subject. Fiction could not awaken the emotions and sustain them at such a pitch as the recital of the experiences of the real life of the foreigners of this country. This letter will therefore be cramped and stiff. "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself in it," and the wrappings altogether too narrow.

I will divide the subject into three parts: 1. The Field. 2. The People. 3. Baptist Mission Work.

The readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR are sufficiently familiar with the geography of this country to know that Manitoba and the Northwest comprise a large portion of our great Dominion. Our mission operations are confined to a portion about 1,000 miles long, by 400 miles wide. Nearly 2,000 miles beyond our most northerly station would bring us to the Klondyke. Along this route and in this rich gold field are multitudes in deep need of the gospel. But these are to us yet "regions beyond" both our means and the scope of this letter.

The importance of this "great Northwest" is beginning to dawn upon the people of the East and the Empire. "Westward the course of Empire takes its way." These wide prairies offer comfortable homes to millions, and the easy conditions under which they may be obtained and the forms of government under which they may be enjoyed attract people of many lands to settle here. Here there is no Ulster nor slave nor serf. This is a land of civil and religious liberty, where equal rights are offered alike to all. "One law . . . to the native and the stranger . . . among us."

One need not put his ear to the ground to hear the

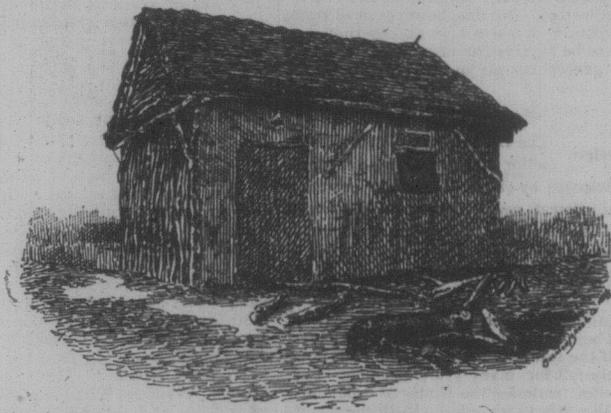
The Mennonites are mostly in southern Manitoba where they occupy a block of land about 40 x 20 miles.

We have now in this mission field 85,000 Germans and Mennonites all speaking the German language, 7,500 Doukhobors, 12,000 Icelanders, 12,000 Scandinavians, 30,000 Galicians and Bukowiner (Austrians). There are also a great many other foreigners, and all these are only the vanguard of the coming mighty host.

Some of these people, like the Icelanders and the Austrians, left their native land because they were overcrowded or the land too poor to yield them a fair support even with hard toil. Others like the Mennonites, Doukhobors, Stundists and Baptists were driven from their native land by persecution. To hear these tell the story of their sorrow and suffering would awaken pity in any ordinary heart. Yet even the infliction of these sufferings does not move the hearts of the priests and rulers at whose hands they have suffered, and where many of their friends still suffer. They endured unutterable grief and sought refuge in different lands, and only after they had lost all hope of securing liberty at home did they leave their native land to seek homes in this "land of the free." Like the Pilgrim Fathers many of them left their native land with prayer for its enlightenment.

On the boundary between Russia in Europe and Asia, and on the general route exiles are taken to Siberia, there is a rude monument called the "monument of weeping." On one side is chiselled the one word "Europe" and on the other "Asia." Here the exiles are permitted by their guards to take a last farewell of their fatherland before starting their long march to Siberia from which death only can release.

Multitudes of our brethren are exiles in Siberia and elsewhere now. The story of Evangeline is not as pathetic as the story of the parting of loved ones and the breaking of family ties that take place yet in those lands



A GALICIAN HOUSE IN MANITOBA.

tramp, tramp, tramp, of peoples from afar. The steady tread of the incoming host awakens the sleepers from dreams of "a nation yet to be" to the fact that a nation is already born, and in its veins is the blood of the sturdiest peoples of the earth.

Its possibilities like its territory have not yet been surveyed, they reach beyond the most distant horizon of our present point of view.

The Toronto Globe says: "Those who want to be in touch with the really great movements of the day should keep their eyes on the Canadian west, where settlers are coming in at an unprecedented rate."

THE PEOPLE.

The foreigners include English-speaking people coming here from the United States, but we do not speak of them as foreigners. This letter has to deal with all those settlers who speak a foreign language, and the variety of those peoples and languages is very great. In one public school in Manitoba there are seventeen different nationalities represented. A friend has just told me he was shown people of fourteen different nationalities in one short walk on the streets of Winnipeg.

Yorkton is the most cosmopolitan town in Canada. It is said that thirty-three different languages are spoken on the streets. It is easy to count upwards of twenty which are in common use. It has a colony of 5,000 Doukhobors, and another with as many Galicians, all of whom talk Russian. There is also a colony of Highland Crofters, and also a large colony of Hungarians. The Germans have taken possession literally of whole townships. All of them together, with the settlers from Ontario, United States and England, are to be found scattered all the way to Prince Albert. In Yorkton we have a Doukhobor village with gray mud colored houses with sod roofs. Also Hungarian villages, with neat log houses, white as lime can make them.

These foreigners are settled mostly in colonies or settlements at different points over the whole country. In walking the streets of their villages or in a drive through the colonies one could easily imagine himself in a foreign land.

from which our persecuted foreigners come. It is joyously pathetic to see the family re-unions that take place in this country ever summer as those long separated meet again. The principal beliefs of these escaped exiles, though foreigners among us, are: Mennonite, of which there are several divisions: Old Mennonite, Modified Mennonite, Reformed Mennonite, Holdermans branch, Mennonite Brethren, (Baptist, with some customs such as foot washing added) and Mennonite Baptist. Most of the Germans are Lutheran in belief, so are the Icelanders and Scandinavians. The Galicians are mostly Roman Catholics of a very low type, and the Bukowiner are mostly Greek Catholics. There is practically little difference between them. But many of them are dissatisfied in their present state and are seeking the truth and salvation. Some of our brightest Christians are from amongst these peoples.

BAPTIST MISSION WORK.

I can say very little here of our work amongst these peoples.

Until very recently there was no evangelical work done amongst the Germans and Mennonites in this country except what was done by Baptists, and very little is done amongst these or the Galicians or Bukowiner yet except what we are doing; and very little is being done among any of the other nationalities by any evangelical body. So that Baptist mission work amongst these people is nearly all I have known of being done amongst them.

We have seven German missionaries and a colporteur doing work amongst Mennonites and Germans and Galicians. The Mennonites are only touched by two or three of the German missionaries. All our German members number 600. We have only four missionaries amongst the 12,000 Scandinavians and only two amongst the 20,000 Galicians, Bro. Geo. Burgdorf and S. T. Muscho. The former gives half his time to German work and the other half to about 5000 Galicians. Of the latter Bro. McLaurin writes from Yorkton: "We have Sylvester T. Muscho, a Russian, an unmarried man of about forty-five years, working among the Doukhobors and Galicians. He meets them in their houses, and

sometimes has twenty or more meet with him where he boards to whom he reads and speaks. We have Joseph Yakus, a Baptist from Hungary, a prosperous settler, living among his people and preaching to them. A young Hungarian has also applied to me to go to college at Brandon to prepare himself for the work. If he proves a worthy man, this will be a splendid investment for some of the Lord's money. The Hungarians are an excellent class of people."

We have one Icelandic mission, and one missionary amongst the thousands of French. "What are these among so many," and what of the multitudes of others we are unable to make any move to reach with the word of life.

We are unable to meet the requirements or grasp the opportunities open to us. Our lamented Bro. Alex. Grant was one day standing on the platform of the station in Winnipeg as great numbers of these foreigners poured from the trains. A friend who saw him approached so speak to him. He found him with his face bathed in tears. Upon inquiring the cause of his trouble he replied, "I am wondering how we are to get the gospel to all these people." He grasped the situation so fully that it overcame him.

This work is full of promise. The tyranny these people suffered in their native land has soured many of them on the forms of religion under which they suffered, and now that they are cut loose from their old masters they are free to hear the truth and embrace it and become servants of Christ. While they are taking their first breath of the air of freedom and are adapting themselves to our ways we have an opportunity of reaching them. To neglect them now will be to miss the wave that has brought them so near us and will bear them away from us unless we grasp them at once.

Their needs are great, but this gives us a better chance to approach them. They are poor and struggling for homes. Our work and customs and language are strange to them. To help them now will gain their friendship and confidence for the future and give us access to them with the gospel which is their greatest need, and to bring them this all our efforts must be directed.

The difficulties of the work are great and many. The great variety of languages that must be used in communicating with these foreigners is a serious difficulty in the work. They must hear us speak in their own tongue the wonderful works and words of God. We have not now the miraculous gift of tongues, nor have we the means to support men while acquiring these languages. We must get missionaries belonging to these various nationalities to speak to their own countrymen. This will require many men even to give one to each nationality. God has sent us some, as Bro. Burgdorf, who can speak in several languages, and so can preach to as many different people. Some of our Eastern brethren have thought that we should get all these foreigners to come to English-speaking churches. That is quite impossible, so no further discussion is needed. We must employ similar means to those employed among the French in Quebec and Nova Scotia. We must go to them with the gospel in their own language. The writing on the cross was in the languages spoken by the people so that all could read it, and we must tell the story of that cross and explain its meaning in the languages of the people to whom we tell it, and we must provide them with Bibles and good literature in their own languages. Some time these people will know English speech and customs and will require English-speaking pastors. There are cases of this kind now in the States. Like the children of Gaelic-speaking people in the Eastern Provinces, the English has taken the place of the language of their fathers. But we cannot wait until generations pass away and their descendants exchange their language for English before we will give them the gospel; by that time our opportunity of reaching either the fathers or their children would be past.

It is difficult to get good men, with the language, who will or can endure the hardships of this work. The conditions under which they must labor are very trying. Bro. Burgdorf, for instance, has had to reside in Emerson and drive sixteen miles to his German appointment, as no house could be secured for him nearer.

He has had to endure cold and privation few could stand. The houses of the Galicians are very small and ill-kept, and the food coarse and poorly cooked. In two days Bro. B. had three meals, two of which were sauer kraut. Before the chapel was built he preached in private houses, the hens and dogs and hogs mingling with the congregation. The difficulties of presenting the Gospel in such circumstances are indescribable. Refined and educated men, who will labor in such conditions exercise great self-denial. Bro. D. Q. McDonald baptized the first Galician convert in this country. Bro. Burgdorf has baptized seven since. The first Galician Baptist chapel in Canada was dedicated at Stuartburn, near Emerson, last summer. The Baptists are endeavoring to preach a pure Gospel and proclaim the whole truth to these foreigners, and God is blessing our efforts.

"COME OVER AND HELP US."