

OUR PIONEER BISHOP : THE HON. AND RIGHT REVEREND JOHN
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IN ancient times of Western Canadian history, when Ontario was in its cradle, and the lively young papoose was opening its eyes to gaze wonderingly at the first stray glimpses of sunshine among its pine forests and uncleared bush, a Scottish lad, then just coming of age, sailed from Greenock for New York, in the month of August, 1799. Upper Canada was the destined field of his life-work, and Kingston the place of his destination.

General Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, a man of rare sagacity and foresight, had conceived magnificent plans for the improvement of the young colony, as a rival to the recently revolted States. The site of its future capital was already selected by him on the Bay of Toronto, and the ephemeral wigwams of the Mississagua savage were giving place to more substantial log huts and frame dwellings. He had devised schemes for the liberal endowment of educational institutions adapted to the wants of the Province, when it should emerge from its infantile rudeness; and accordingly a favouring despatch from the Duke of Portland, in 1797, had responded to an address from the Provincial Parliament, praying His Majesty "to appropriate a portion of the waste lands of the Crown for the establishment and support of a Grammar School in each district, and also of a College or University for the instruction of youth in the different branches of liberal knowledge." Surely never were waste lands appropriated to wiser use. The plan was still in embryo; but every year's delay left the rising generation to grow up devoid of the training that should fit them for self-government; and the energetic Lieutenant Governor was impatient to make a beginning.

He accordingly gave authority to two members of his Council to secure the requisitely gifted instructor. They, in their turn, applied to friends in Scotland, and their first choice showed that the confidence had not been misplaced.

Among a group of students at the ancient University of St. Andrews, three youths of nearly the same age were there united together by common tastes and sympathies, in a friendship only broken by death. One of these, Thomas Duncan, died in honoured old age, Professor of Mathematics in that University; another, Thomas Chalmers, lived to fill professorial chairs at St. Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and to win himself a name among the foremost of the great and good in his native land; the third, John Strachan, survived both of his early friends, made his mark in a new world, and on a young country, that then lay in embryo among the uncleared pine-forests of Western Canada, and closed his career as Bishop of the first Diocese of the Anglican Church, built up, mainly by his own exertions, among the clearings of its vast wilderness.

Thomas Chalmers was the first choice of those entrusted with the selection of a director for the educational system of Upper Canada; and curious is it to reflect how different might have been the future, not of Canada only, but of Scotland, had his sagacious organizing abilities and wise philanthropy found an arena for their exercise in the moulding of this young State. But it was not so to be. Happily, for Scotland at least, Thomas Chalmers clung to his native soil; and so the next choice fell on his friend and fellow-student, John Strachan.

The future Bishop of Toronto was by birth and early training an Aberdonian.