

Along the Line.

THE INDIAN WORK.

MANITOBA AND THE NORTH-WEST.

*Extracts of a letter from REV. EDWARD EVES, dated
NORWAY HOUSE, December 23rd, 1890.*

WE are all well; thanks to the Giver of all good! We are still earnestly, by visitation, teaching and preaching, pursuing the work of the Lord. I was down to Cross Lake a few weeks ago, and gave them the sacrament. We had a good time. The chief was not there, but came late at night. In the morning early, just before I got into the canoe, he came and asked me if I would give him the sacrament, saying, "My dear brother, I would feel very sore in my heart if you were to go away and I not have the privilege of remembering the dear Saviour by taking the sacrament. If it was any earthly thing I would not mind it, but I cannot bear to have you go away without giving me the holy sacrament." Of course, I gave it to him. We turned and went into the school-house, and after solemn prayer, in which he earnestly united, he partook with great comfort. I received a letter from there lately, giving encouraging reports.

Last night I received another letter from Bro. Harty, of Nelson House, also giving encouraging accounts of the earnestness of the Indians concerning spiritual things. But we will have to do something more for them soon. We have no church there, as I told you in a former letter, but the Indians say they will build one if the Missionary Society will help them a little in the way of boarding them and buying nails, etc., that they cannot make themselves. With the excellent young man that you sent us here as teacher, I could spend a good part of the next summer with them, if you would give me permission. Bro. Gaudin is a good preacher, and the work here would not suffer. I could take Wm. Moore with me—a good worker, and fast, a carpenter besides—and we could do a good thing for them. If we could do this, and also supply them with Bibles and hymn-books, we need not fear any hostile influence.

Another thing that I would like to mention, is something that has been impressed on my mind with great force for some time past. Could we not have the *Pleasant Hours* translated and printed in the Cree? I don't know if it has been proposed before, but it does not matter. If this could be accomplished, no living man could calculate the benefit it would be to the Indian. The Cree is so widely spoken. No Christian denomination has yet moved in this matter, and along with the Cree characters and the Cree Bibles, which the Methodist Church has given to the Indian, it would be a living monument to the earnestness and thoroughness of the work of our Church. It might be thought that our mission schools will supersede the necessity. Never; no, never. The immobility of the Indian is next to that of the Chinese, if, in fact, it does not exceed it. Besides, how few get any lasting benefit—I mean an education that will give them the benefit of English literature,

from our schools? Just two or three in the whole place can read English after the years of school here. How it is in other places I can only judge from my knowledge of the Indian character. I am not advocating the abolition of mission schools. So far as I have seen, they are vastly superior to the Government schools, and are a real necessity. But when the boy goes from school, at the age of say fourteen, he is still a Cree reader and talker. Except in very rare cases, he will not use his knowledge of English, and consequently forgets it very soon. But the Cree characters, once learned, are never forgotten. In them he writes, and those only will he take the trouble to read. The $\nabla\Delta\Delta$ are read everywhere, and by every one. They teach each other until, away north to the Arctic Circle, and west to the Rockies, and south and east, the Cree characters are known and read. Now, this is the breadth of circulation that the paper I propose would have. It would be carried home from our Sabbath-schools and devoured, and folded up carefully until the next one that had not seen it would come in, and it would be given to him. It would travel on the dog sled and in the canoe, along rivers and through forests, until it was read by people who have never yet seen the face of the missionary. They would fly like angels of light, bearing the message of salvation to places where the foot of a missionary will never make a track.

I don't like to refer to the present efforts of sending the English publication, after my mind has been dwelling upon the benefit of the Cree publication. What benefit would the dear children and people of Ontario get from the same papers if they were written in Cree. We give them out, but I never do so without a sore heart. What a living power they would be if in the Cree? As they are, they fall upon us like the November snowflake—they melt as they fall, but convey no life-giving power to the recipient.

One man living at Toronto, who understood the English and the Cree, with additional plant, would be the only extra expense.

Another thing I beg leave to mention. Could we not have a branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society at this place, selling Cree Bibles? Many would be given away, but many would be purchased. I do not like the idea of *giving* to the Indian everything he wants. He cannot rise to the dignity of manhood under this system. Numbers now are far above being treated as paupers, and were they able, would be pleased to bear the expense of everything.

I could take charge of the branch and sell the Bibles and Testaments, and make returns, as I received it. The people are always asking me for Bibles, and I have none to give them. There are thousands through this country that have no Bible. I do hope something will be done to relieve us concerning this matter.

NOTE.—Since the above letter was written, a consignment of Cree Bibles have arrived from England, and will be shipped north by the first boat from Winnipeg, the coming Spring. The committee has also authorized the printing of some tracts, etc., in the syllabic characters as an experiment, and, if successful these will be followed by other publications.