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HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

NO. 14—DIOCESE OF MACKENZIE RIVER.

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By THE REV. FRED. E. J. LLOYD, SHIGAWAKE, P. Q.

FORBIDDING and inhospitable as are the Arctic regions generally, their almost perpetual snows have been trodden for many years by the feet of a band of heroic men (and in some instances women), whose only

attraction thitherward was the souls of the heathen native races to whom they longed to be the bearers of the simple, yet eloquent, and saving story of the Cross. Of these heroes no one has exhibited the virtues of heroism in a more striking degree than W. C. Bompas, bishop, whose life and work amongst the various Indian tribes of the Mackenzie River form the subject of the present article. His unwearied and loving patience and fidelity, ceaseless toils and apostolic zeal are known to "all the churches," while to the outside world they present a noble and irresistible testimony to the supernatural characters of

that power (I mean the Christian faith) which can enlist in its service those of our race in whose persons and lives are found the sum of the virtues and excellencies which adorn the human character.

The diocese of Mackenzie River, which comprises a territorial extent of about 850,000 square miles, and lies between lat. 60°—70°, and long. 100°—141°, was first formed from that of Rupert's Land in 1874 and subdivided in 1884, up to which time it had been known as the Diocese of Athabasca.

In the year 1865 the future bishop offered himself to the Church Missionary Society for work amongst the Indians in the far North, and having been accepted, he took his journey with as little delay as possible to the scene of his future labors.

For the long period of seventeen years, however, prior to that time the Venerable Archdeacon Hunter, and after him the Reverends W. W. Kirkby and R. Macdonald had done good and successful work mostly of an itinerating character amongst the Tukuth and Youcon tribes, as also among the Eskimo of the Mackenzie, which went far to pave the way for the more extended labors of Bishop

Bompas. About the space of a year before the appointment of the Rev. W. C. Bompas to the Mackenzie River mission, a chief of the Tukuth tribe died in the faith of Christ, exhorting his people to become Christians. This may be said to have been the first fruits of the combined work of the devoted missionaries before mentioned. In the year 1859 the Rev. W. W. Kirkby was appointed to the permanent charge of the Mackenzie River district, and he chose Fort Simpson, charmingly situated on the east side of the noble river, as his fixed place of residence. He fell to work and in a remarkably brief space



RT. REV. W. C. BOMPAS, D. D.

First Bishop of Mackenzie River.

of time a handsome church, parsonage and school were erected under what difficulties may be imagined when we are told that at no time during their construction was Mr. Kirkby able to procure more than two or three laborers at a time. And here this devoted servant of Christ lived, isolated and alone, toiling and praying until joined by the Rev. W. C. Bompas six years afterwards in 1865. Mr. Bompas left England on the 30th June in that year, and travelling by way of the United States reached Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan