

THE DIOCESE OF SELKIRK—ITS WORK AND WORKERS.

PIONEERS—THE DIOCESE AND ITS BISHOP—LIFE
IN THE NORTH—THE INDIANS—KLONDYKE
—LETTERS FROM BISHOP BOMPAS

(*Archdeacon Canham in C.M.S. Intelligencer.*)

DESIROUS in some way besides those at present open to one of creating an interest and bringing more to the front, the work being carried on by the C.M.S. missionaries in the far off and apparently little known diocese of Selkirk, it has occurred to me that to give in the pages of the *Intelligencer* some facts from personal experience and observation might perhaps promote my object.

Since our coming home on furlough, we have tried by letter writing and printed appeals, which have been circulated in England and Canada to make our diocese and its needs known, but letters and appeals fail to give an adequate idea of the country or the work. My purpose then here, will be to give a brief sketch of the work done in that part of the country which forms the present diocese of Selkirk, from its commencement to our time.

Originally, as is known, there was but one diocese—Rupert's Land, founded in 1849, for the whole of the North-West Canada, and this continued to be the case until 1872, when a division of four parts was made, the three new dioceses, being Athabasca, Moosonee, and Saskatchewan. In 1884, Athabasca was divided, and Mackenzie River diocese formed; and in 1891, the diocese of Selkirk was formed out of Mackenzie River. It will give some idea of the vast extent of country known as North-West Canada, and also of what has been done for the spiritual wants of the scattered tribes of Indians, if it is remembered that one of the large dioceses into which the original diocese has been cut up, (Moosonee) contains an area of not less than eight hundred square miles.

The work in Selkirk, the part of the "Great Lone Land" now to be treated of, does not date from the foundation of the diocese; it goes much further back, and to be understood must be traced from its beginning. The pioneer of this work was Mr. W. W. Kirkby, afterwards Archdeacon, who in the year 1862, while as yet the diocese of Rupert's Land remained undivided, resolved to make a journey down the Mackenzie, cross the Rocky Mountains from Peel River, and carry the "glad tidings" to the farthest limits of the British territory. On reaching the Yukon River, Mr. Kirkby spent several days with the Indians who assembled in large numbers and from many tribes, at the Hudson Bay Company's trading

post, Fort Yukon, and then returned to his distant station, Fort Simpson, on the Mackenzie River. The journey occupied three months, and Mr. Kirkby had travelled at least 3000 miles. The visit to the Yukon was a short one, but our pioneer had prepared the way for a missionary who was about to appear on the scene, settle down and establish a Mission among these Indians. Mr. Kirkby had, moreover, made so great an impression that to this day he is affectionately remembered by the older people, and spoken of by them as "trootsheid gikhyi tsul" (the first and small speaker).

In the autumn of the same year, the Rev. R. McDonald (now Archdeacon of Mackenzie River) arrived in the Yukon district, and for ten years labored indefatigably, carrying the Gospel to numerous tribes, hitherto strangers to the "joyful sound." Mr. McDonald's removal from this post and its near neighborhood, was occasioned by the Hudson Bay Company abandoning their trading post at Fort Yukon. He now started a new Mission at Fort Macpherson, Peel River, east of the Rockies, and most northerly of the stations in the Mackenzie River diocese, and at intervals, till within the last few years, visited the Yukon, making a journey on each occasion of some 1500 miles. The Archdeacon who is home on furlough, has just finished the great work of translating the whole Bible in the Tukudh language.

In 1882, the late Rev. V. C. Sim, who went out in 1879, was sent to establish a Mission (the first on the west of the mountains since the vacating of the one at Fort Yukon) at Rampart House on the Porcupine River. He visited the Yukon in the summers of 1883 and 1884, and was looking forward very anxiously to a third visit, when in the spring of 1885 in the presence of the writer he was called home, to the great sorrow of all who knew him. Although in the neighborhood, I could not conveniently fill our dear brother's place that year, but the following year (1886) I visited Rampart House and thence by special invitation went on to visit the Yukon River tribes.

I may perhaps be excused if I dwell a little on this visit, it being my first, and ultimately resulting in my appointment two years later to open up a new work among the Indians. Leaving my station, Peel River, in the month of April by dog train, I crossed the mountains, and on the eleventh day from starting reached Rampart House, distance 330 miles. Thirty miles a day on snow-shoes is considered good travelling. Waiting here for the breaking up of the ice, I was kept busy the next month teaching a large band of Indians who had assembled here hoping to meet me. For the onward journey I took with me two natives, leaving