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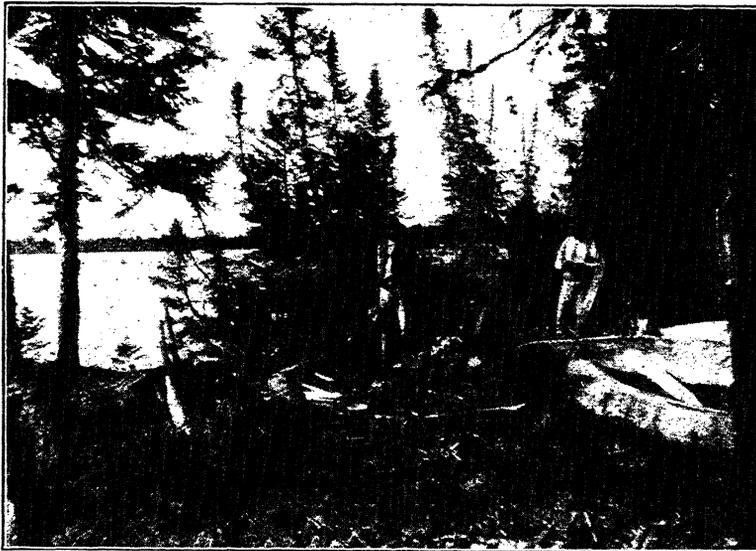
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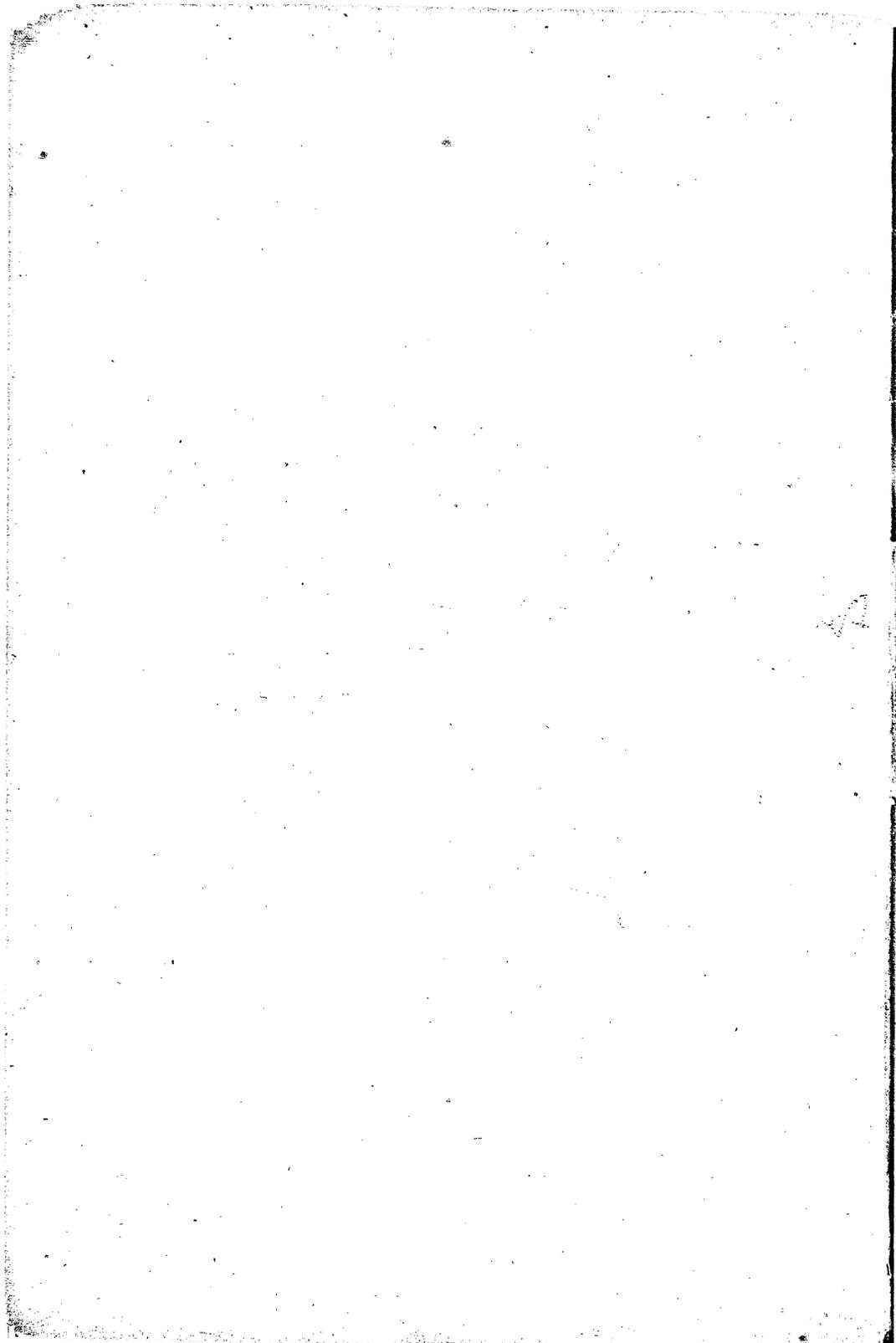
Life at Moose Fort.



By S. NEWNHAM.



Price 4d.



LIFE AT MOOSE FORT.

BY

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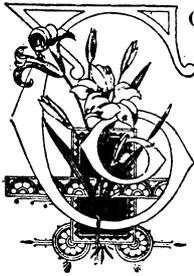
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DINNER CAMP NEAR WENISK RIVER. CANOES READY FOR REPAIRING.



LIFE AT MOOSE FORT.



O our many kind Friends, known and unknown, let me first confess that I began this paper trying to disguise names and personalities so as to make them unrecognisable to dwellers in Moose, but, after a page or two, I gave this up in despair, and, if you have patience to wade through the whole, you will have a true picture of folk and life as we find them here, which will, we hope, help to increase your prayerful sympathy with your brethren in far-off Moosonee.

Let me, then, introduce you to a pretty little native, Maggie by name. Her age must be about eleven years at the time our story opens, but age is not much considered in these parts, and hardly any of the children, even quite big ones, can tell how old they are; if you are sufficiently curious on the subject, you can look up their names in the Baptismal Register, and guess at the date of their birth from that. Greater accuracy seems impossible, owing to their habits of life and thought; time makes little impression on them, except as it brings round the season of rabbits, fish, potatoes, etc.; not unlike our old countrywoman, by the way, whose son had gone to sea "two year come kidney-bean time." Some Indians brought in a fine baby to be baptised this April; the mother said it was born early in February, the father thought it was much later. They had spent the winter in their lonely wigwam miles off in the bush, just keeping the Sundays as they came round according to their marked Mission Calendar, but otherwise taking no note of days and weeks!

But to return to Maggie, as we meet her this bright September evening, coming down with her little tin pail or, as it is called here, kettle of milk, which she has just fetched from the Company's dairy,

for her baby brother is ill, and her father is a servant of the Company, so she has an order from the authorities to get her kettle full of milk every evening for some time to come. This is a great boon, as the Company and the C.M.S. Mission are, of course, the only cattle owners for many hundreds of miles round, and those to whom they cannot give milk must go without; however, with the constant care of the missionaries and the doctor, no case of need is ever neglected. Maggie is coming along in her staid little way, with her plaid shawl over her head, and such a pretty little face it is that peeps out from its folds, the large dark eyes shining out, and just a rich warm brown on the skin; she would make a very good-looking *East Indian*. But her leisurely movements are slightly quickened by the appearance of her mother at a door not far away, who holds the baby in her arms, and tries to soothe its wailing by endless little jerks, and calls out, "Quick, now, Maggie; baby wants his milk." "I'm got it," is the only reply, and the kettle is carried indoors, where baby is soon comforted with the needed drink, and packed away for a sleep in the oddest little hammock, slung from the ceiling right over and across the mother's bed, so that she can put up her hand, if baby wakes in the night, and give it a swing without really disturbing herself. Certainly, the trouble of babies is minimised here where they are packed up so snugly, and kept so warm and quiet in their moss bags, laced into the bright stuff case, too well known to need describing here.

Whilst the baby sleeps we will look round this little home, first taking note of the mother, when we understand at once the sweetness of little Maggie's face, for Babbie is a really handsome woman, of a beautiful colouring, and fine tall figure. She is busy at this moment over her little stove, for the factory bell has just rung for the men to leave work, as it is six o'clock, and a shout and scramble of bare feet outside tells that the father is in sight, and the shoal of children are off to meet him. Where they all get stowed away at night is a marvel, for the upper floor of these houses is not much used in winter, the lower room, which opens straight from the grassy bank, being the common room for every one and everything. What sort of furniture, did you ask? Well, there is a very useful stove, that is the one indispensable article in every house, two short benches or stools, easily moved wherever they may be needed, and a *small* table. Two big beds, covered with wondrous patchwork quilts, take up a good deal of the space, and accommodate a fair number of the family at night; for the rest and for any visitors, well, they can roll out rabbit-skin rugs or other bundles on the floor, and roll them up out of the way during

the day. Lilac print pillow-slips can be kept as clean as white things, but they certainly do not give the same fresh look to the bed you would see !

And now, whilst we have been gossiping, the father has come in, and is waiting for his evening meal of fried fish and bread ; butter is a luxury not to be indulged in. He is an honest-looking fellow, with a touch of Indian in him, as is the case with most of those with whom we have to do. His wife is nearly pure Indian. He goes by the name of Jack McDougall, but there is as much of that glorious uncertainty about names as there is about ages in these parts. Maggie is always called "Maggie Jack" by her companions, and this custom of calling children by their father's Christian name causes surnames to disappear amongst the more Indian part of the community.

The next day Babbie decided that the baby was well enough to be left in Maggie's charge, whilst she went out to get fresh supplies for their larder, or, I should more properly say, for their frying-pan. So baby was set in the Indian cradle and taken outside, and there stood up endwise against the house wall, while the sister-in-charge played round with a host of barefooted, bareheaded, brown-skinned little ragamuffins, just as happy as the day was long. Babbie joined her brother's wife, Jane Mark, and set off for the river ; here lay their birch-bark canoe, bottom up, high on the bank ; they turned it over, and, each taking hold of one side, carried it gently down the steep muddy slope, and slid it into the water. These canoes are so easily bruised and torn, and are so important in life on the Bay, that they are treated far more tenderly than are human beings here, and are never, under any consideration, dragged on the ground, always *carried*. The women deposited their implements in the canoe, and took their places, one in the bow and the other in the stern, both kneeling and leaning back against the narrow thwarts, and so they paddled quickly away round the island. Their destination was the mouth of one or two streams or "creeks" on the northern shore, where they had fixed their nets, and they reached the grounds after a half hour or so of stiff paddling. The nets were set right across the creek to catch the fish as they came up with the tide, and as the two women hauled them up bit by bit they got out, with great satisfaction, a number of splendid, glistening white fish. It being well on into September, the ducks and geese were beginning to fly southwards, and Jane had taken her gun, for she was a very good shot, and they might well get a chance at some birds in the creeks, and with this idea they stayed about some hours, but at last turned back towards the Post, having had no luck, except with the fish. On

landing they divided their spoils, Babbie taking hers home for her hungry youngsters ; but Jane, happening to have in a good stock of food just then, set off for the Mission House, carrying her fish tied up in a large red cotton handkerchief. Arriving there, she first lifted the latch and walked into the kitchen, and stood silently in the corner. The tidy maid, busy over her ironing, greeted her with the usual "What cheer?" but nothing more passed between them. A very wrinkled old woman was already squatting on the floor, a piece of old blanket over her shoulders, her grey hair straggling from under a cotton handkerchief ; she blinked up at the newcomer with her almost sightless old eyes, and asked, "What luck with the nets?" Two or three girls with kettles for milk dropped in at intervals, and joined the waiting group, but no one thinks of knocking at the door or stating their errand ; they just let themselves in, and await developments. People of a more pushing nature, however, sometimes march through the kitchen, and upstairs to the dwelling-rooms, in search of "minister" or his wife.

So Jane waited with the rest until "the mistress" came down to see to the evening's skimming, and found quite a large audience waiting for her. She began with Granny Pott, asking what she had come for. "Mola ka-kwan" (nothing), was the reply. "I'm just comin' seeing you ; this first time I'm comin' seeing you," she continued, bobbing her old chin. "I wash and comb my face and my hair, comin' seeing you." "Well, that's all right, Granny ; it looks very nice!" Then came a pause, and she tries another tack. "I like Bissip, you know ; very much I like Bissip," and she peers up to watch the effect of her words, the mistress still pretending not to see the object of all these compliments. "And I'm glad to hear that, Granny ; so you should like him." This was really quite disheartening ; but she catches sight of a tin of baking powder on the table, this will surely lead up to the right subject, so she begins again :— "That nice tin to keep bit of tea ; I like that tin, very much I like that tin." "If you had a tin like that, what would you do with it?" "I put my tea in ; but I'm got none tea," with a woe-begone shake of the head, "No tea, not a sup." "Well, now, Granny, that tin has something in it, but I think I could find you one just like it," and the little housewife disappears into the dairy—larder—store-room with her bunch of keys, returning in a minute with a tin in her hand, and a mischievous smile on her face. Granny takes the tin, and is just preparing a bigger hint when she hears something rattle, and, taking off the lid, discovers that some tea has already been put in, so she pours out a flood of broken thanks, praise, and comic ejaculations,

as the Bishop's wife turns to the next with, "Now, Jane, what have you brought me to-night? I'm badly in need of fresh food, for there is just nothing to give my family now." So Jane opens her handkerchief, and displays the beautiful fish, which are then weighed, and the price calculated. "And what are you wanting for it?" is the next question. Sugar and a little tea are the objects of her desire this time, and a small amount of each is weighed out, and tied up in separate corners of the fish-carrying handkerchief; if she had happened to want the much-prized "grease" it would have been tied up in the same way, for baskets we have none. On being asked what her husband was about, Jane replied that he was better, and was "going off" next day to look for geese and ducks, down to the marsh being the best place for such a hunt, so she was told not to forget the Mission House on any account, if he were successful, for this was still the season of scarcity, no fresh meat to be had of any kind, and hardly any birds come in.

The milk was skimmed next, and the waiting kettles filled up and carried away for the sick at this end of the settlement, and the audience was closed for that evening, only to be reopened before 8 a.m. next morning, when more girls and kettles arrived. Then some little dainty was often saved from the breakfast table—a cup of good coffee, or some such thing—to be sent to Rose, a delicate woman, wife to one of the Company's servants. She is just a beautiful woman, her earnest, loving, Christ-like spirit just shining out in her face, always ready to do a kindly act for any one in need. She is loved and respected by all, and is able to speak many a warning or helpful word for her Master's sake. She is now a great sufferer, and the Mission folk feel it a joy to add to her few comforts in any way, so one of Jane's fish was nicely cooked and sent round for her next morning, and when her little Janey was asked if mother was able to take it, she put her head shyly on one side, saying, "She eat half of it; she put by half for her dinner!" (but one cannot give in writing the funny little upward intonation so general here, nor the quaint pronunciation). Janey is a sweet little child, but, as the only girl, slightly spoilt. Her mother always keeps her most beautifully clean and nicely dressed, and her brother Jim takes her to and from school, and cares for her in the most fatherly way; Robbie, the bigger boy, is devoted almost exclusively to his mother, on whom he waits with a woman's care, and richly she deserves it. It is hard to tell you what Rose is; in fact, she is one of those whose influence for good will never be known until the secrets of all hearts are revealed. She acted as interpreter when Mrs. N. first held her class

for Indian girls, beginning with a Bible lesson, and going on to a sewing class, and it was a comfort to know that all the teaching would be passed on with power as finding an echo in her own heart. The missionaries, too, depend much on her help in correcting the Cree of their sermons, as that language is her mother tongue, although she is now so well taught in English and religion. With all this, you would never imagine that all her early life was spent in tents, where she was brought up, in the midst of a bad set of Indians, and Rose lived the usual Indian life until she married a half-breed, or, as they are called, native servant. So she is just an instance of the wonderful change that can be, and is, worked by the Holy Spirit ; one of those cases that cause our missionaries to "thank God, and take courage" in the midst of their many discouragements.

Life is so uneventful in these parts that you would weary of a detailed account, so we will pass over Fred Mark's hunt, which brought a goose and several ducks to the Mission store, and these were followed by numbers more, brought in by various Indians. All that were not needed for immediate use were put in pickle for the winter, so this was quite a harvest time for the Indians, the price of the birds supplying them with flour, powder, shot, etc., for the winter hunt. Fairly heavy falls of snow came by the middle of October, with very high winds, and preparations were made on all hands for needful winter accommodation ; day by day the hunters took down their tents, and went off in their canoes with their families to their distant hunting-grounds in the woods. Those who lingered were forced by the violent winds to move their wigwams into the shelter of the bush. The sudden cold carried off three or four of the sickly ones, including good Peter Kacheche. You will remember Sam, the Mission factotum, trained under Bishop Horden—such a good fellow, and so useful in every way—he is an Indian, but talks English very well ; he reads Cree beautifully, and assists in reading the Cree Services in church, interprets for an English preacher when required, or preaches himself whenever called upon. He is a very good carpenter, and does all the building and mending about the Mission premises, besides all the outdoor work that George Spence cannot manage. I don't give you Sam's surname, for surnames are so confusing here, and all his children are called after him, Babbie Sam and Sammy Sam, and so forth. Now I am coming to the point : Sam's sister, Harriet, was Peter Kacheche's wife, and all through poor Peter's illness, a lingering consumption, Sam kept the whole family in his little wooden house, although his own family was large, the latest addition being twin girls. Poor Harriet was worn to

a shadow with nursing and watching, and her grief was very sad to see when Peter was taken from her. The neighbours showed much sympathy with her, and respect for his Christian life; the coffin was taken to the little schoolhouse, and lay there until the funeral, which was attended by a number of Indians.

When the first shock of her loss was over, indeed within a few days of Peter's death, Harriet had to face the question of how to support her children. She is young, clean, and most willing to work and anxious to please, so Mrs. N. gladly engaged her to come to the Mission House every week to do the laundry and scrubbing, and most satisfactorily has she done her work the whole winter through. She has a most pathetic, pale face, with large liquid brown eyes; the Mission babies grew very friendly with her, and she loved to see them pattering round. It would be, perhaps, less confusing to our far-away readers if Harriet's story were here continued up to the date of writing. As the winter wore on she filled up her spare days by going off snaring rabbits or catching fish for food, but this was stopped by the illness of her only little boy, Jimmie. It seemed as if he would very soon follow his father, and Harriet was heart-broken. She had moved into a little cabin with her three children, sharing it with blind old Harriet; it stood just beyond the Mission field, so that she still kept on her work for us, leaving her Maggie to take care of poor little Jim, and running back herself every hour or so to see that all was right. The Bishop and Mrs. N. used to visit him, taking him bright pictures, and singing hymns to him and the old woman, and the doctor was most kind to them, but it seemed a hopeless case. For a week or more he lay there scarcely living, unable to swallow anything but occasional sips of water. The mother's face was pitiful; yet she could say, with the tears in her eyes, that God is good, and that what He did would surely be right. Do you wonder that her faith was rewarded, and that, to everyone's amazement, little Jimmie revived? first taking milk and light things, sent by the Mission folk and the doctor, and presently we heard he was "eating all the time, and never got enough"—birds, rabbits, anything that was sent him! From that time he made steady progress, until one Sunday in April Harriet sailed into church with her boy beside her, almost bursting with thankfulness, and looking, as one remarked, "as proud as a peacock with two tails!" Her face had brightened, and she was continually singing over her work. She said to Mrs. N., with a beaming face, "That's prayers, ma'am, I'm sure that's prayers!"

Towards the end of October, school opened for the winter; about forty at English school every morning, with the Rev. I. J.

Taylor in charge, and teaching the senior division ; the twenty-two juniors, starting from about five years of age, being woman's work. The many inconveniences of the draughty old shanty have been described elsewhere. The teaching is gratis to the people. The Hudson's Bay Company send a load of firewood, and a fatigue party of schoolboys is sent out to split a supply and pack it in the school porch whenever that receptacle is empty. The elder girls sweep the floor before school opens, so there is only the expense of an occasional scrub to add to that of materials provided. The school is occupied in the afternoon by the Indians, and the Bishop gave his attention to teaching the elder ones, whilst bringing on teachers for the rest. Our friend Fred Mark, not being strong enough to go off hunting, taught regularly the whole season, and the juniors were under a bright young Indian widow, Laura, until, rabbits becoming very plentiful, she could keep her children better by going off snaring. A native man set himself to learn Cree, and so won a place, also, on the staff. Of this part of the work there is not much to tell, except that it is great drudgery, and the atmosphere appalling. The Indian odour is simply awful if you go into the room after they have dispersed some time. The more forward ones learn a little English, and in this way Mark Chechoo, son of the factory cook, worked his way up this year into the English school.

Fred Mark is a very intelligent, respectable looking man, and yet you would think a very funny schoolmaster, if you could see him in bad weather, his old *capot* tied round the waist with the usual parti-coloured scarf, the hood drawn well over his head and a long rough willow stick in his hand. He is anxious his eldest boy, Jimmie, should grow up as English as possible, so he was admitted into the baby division in the morning, and was very comic. He sits pretty quiet, blinking his beady eyes round, watching everything that goes on ; his little bullet head having the hair cut very short, except for a thin black tuft that always hangs straight over the said beads. His cousin Maggie kept an eye on him and coached him in the words of the children's songs at home, and as that was his favourite part of school-work, he did well in it. The other children were all good to him and seemed quite proud of his progress. It was fun to watch him when a tune had become familiar, his white teeth gleaming, a rapt expression in the black beads, and the little fellow just singing with all his might. "Jimmie *does* sing hard," the others exclaimed admiringly ; and Maggie chimed in, "He do like singing, he's that way purposely" (purposely=naturally). "Singing's *fne*," sputtered out a lazy little monkey, who will hardly try to do

anything else. They were particularly fond of "Jesus bids us shine," and Maggie and Jim taught it to their Indian relatives, so that after a while the Indian girls could be heard singing it about the settlement in English.

This Infant Class was just an endless source of interest; they are such simple, friendly little souls, on such good terms with their teacher, and bearing no ill-will for the discipline she is bound to exercise. Tears are very near their eyes, and in the early school experiences there were often "rainy days," but they are now much less frequent. The bairns have splendid memories for the Scripture stories, told in the day and Sunday school, and are just insatiable for them; one regular pickle, "Tomshi," as his chums call him, "going in 9," sighed out, "I could listen all day!" The story told one morning, is retold by the children next morning, and the bits of local colouring put in are very effective. Abraham's preparation for the sacrifice of Isaac, reappeared as, "Abram cut a cord of wood." Learning the line "And His cradle was a stall," they would say "shtall" (always preferring sh to s), and when asked what it was, Maggie cheerfully replied, "A place to keep flour and grease," meaning the *Store*!

They learn a short key-text to the lesson every day, and repeat the "back-texts" so nicely, the "fine long ones," that took several days to learn, being the favourites. One can only pray and trust that all this precious seed may fall into good ground and bear the fruit of Christian lives in this rising generation. Have we not the promise, "My Word shall not return unto Me void"? and is that not enough to hearten one for work?

So for a time life at the Post went on with a quiet monotony, marked chiefly by the geese and ducks having passed, and the pheasants being due; but the pheasants came not, or in such small numbers that young and old began to dread a winter of short commons, especially as the white fish, which are generally salted in large quantities, had also been very scarce, and then the river had "taken" very early, so that all was sealed up and covered with a white pall. Yet famine there was none, for God's providence sent innumerable "white-birds" (ptarmigan), which supplied the place of the missing pheasants, and trout were caught in plenty through holes in the ice. These are the excitements of life on the bay, for every child is a born sportsman (!), and the boys are just wild on the subject. It did occur once or twice that a flock of birds were inconsiderate enough to fly over just before the hour for opening school, with the result that about two unadventurous spirits occupied the boys' side of the school for the first half-

hour! On one fine day the Bishop happened to sight two pheasants in the middle of the morning, and thought it was a good chance for him, for he never likes to compete with the Indians, who need such additions to their food so much more; so he seized his gun and ran for the bush where he had seen the birds alight, but before he could reach the place he came face to face with Robbie Turner. "Hulloa! Robbie, aren't you at school this morning?" "Yes, sir," was the unexpected reply, for Robbie had been in school, but, hearing the birds, he made some excuse to slip out, followed and shot them, and giving them to his mother, came back to his work as if nothing had happened.

After school, too, Robbie could be seen daily visiting his hooks down on the river. The ice was dotted at intervals by circles of scooped-up snow and ice, in the centre of which was laid a long stout stick, from which hung a second stick holding the hook and line; each family would have some four or five holes to visit, and this was the duty of the women and boys. Wonderful old Mary Morrison, Tomshi's Granny, set her hooks away at the head of the island, and also placed some rabbit snares along by the track through the bush, so that she could do double work each trip; and she is not the only "Granny," by any means, that keeps up her hunting, for in spite of various drawbacks, the life here makes people well and strong, as long as they lead the out-door life. To begin to nurse an ailment is just fatal in the ill-ventilated, over-crowded houses.

Accidents, of course, occur from time to time. Tomshi's father found his house very damp, so he got men and apparatus and rolled it bodily across the creek, and set it down on a corner of a higher field—a very nice site, sheltered by the bush from the violent western blasts. Of course, all the cousinhood of boys must needs be playing round all the time the men were working, and a heavy sled slipping sideways gave poor Tom a terrible blow, and broke his leg. He was laid up for many weeks in consequence, and had a long lesson in bearing pain and discomfort; but it was perfectly healed in time, and he races round and gets into as much mischief as any other boy in the place.

Then one day Maggie brought word that Jim was "sick." "What ailed him?" "Oh! was climbing on the roof an' brok's arm," said one. "Put's elbow out," said another. Every child had some fresh variation to give; the fact being that Master Jim, with some kindred spirits, had been climbing on the paternal roof and jumping off into a snow-drift, and a bad jump had resulted in a sprained arm. Anyway, he would like the importance of a visit, so one of the Mission folk set off "down below," the Mark residence

being nearly the furthest towards the tail of the island. And what a residence! A small wooden shanty; first sight on opening the door is Jim, his arm in a sling, journeying up and down on a huge patchwork covered bed; his mother is just standing about with the baby on her arm; her sister, a very good-looking, quiet Indian girl sits in a corner; another sister, who has married a Company's servant, is spending the day here, too, with some three or four wild little monkeys of her own, including six-year-old Janie, who is a perfect handful in school for all she can look so innocent and pathetic with her dog-like, big, brown eyes. Nor is this all the congregation: Maggie is there too, and various small Marks "wondermenting" about on the floor and the bed, as we say in Wiltshire; and on the other bed lies poor old Mary, the grandmother, the stock invalid of Moose. Mary has been bedridden for years, and is a terrible sufferer, and there really seems nothing to be done for her except to give palliatives when she is worse than usual; fancy lying there in pain, month after month, in the midst of all this racket!

The women of the household are pretty good in speaking English, so it is easy to go through the formalities of a visit. "Is Jimmie's arm very sore?" "Is Mary very sore?" answered, after a pause, with "She finds about the same." Meanwhile there is a running accompaniment of growling going on near your feet, not from that big shaggy dog beside you though; it attracts the attention of an old neighbour who has dropped in, and, seizing a thick stick, she rakes out a scared looking puppy from under the bed, and taking him by the neck lands him safely outside the door; then returns, with a satisfied smile, to her seat on a cassette, or small wooden trunk. The ordinary topics of conversation being exhausted, we gladden Jim's heart with the gift of a coloured chalk pencil and depart, as the crowd of youngsters squeeze their touzled heads together and flatten their small brown noses against the window to see the last of the curiosity; yet only the *last* for that day. Next afternoon, when Mrs. Newnham is sitting at work in her house, a flutter in her dove-cot betokens the presence of some stranger. Little Hazel trots up to her mother, bending her tiny forefinger into a backward curve in her efforts to point at the door, and exclaiming "Who's that? Who's that?" and behold the two Janies standing at the head of the stairs, having crept up in their usual noiseless fashion. "Well, Janie" (to J. Turner), "and what are you wanting?" "Brought you some shoes, ma'am; this little girl's mother sent them," with a patronising air! So the deer-skin shoes are examined, nicely sewn, and with a little silk-work on the instep; unfortunately, so many Indians have already brought

such wares, that all the Mission folk are abundantly provided for the season, besides having taken some for sending to friends at home, who after all do not appreciate the fragrance of the well-smoked skin! However, the silent Janie is watching with her pathetic eyes, and there are the four little ones at her home to be fed and clothed by, we must confess it, a very shiftless Indian mother; so the shoes are accepted with a query as to what will be wanted in return. The spokeswoman replies, "A muffler, and please she would like one crimson an' pink." Mrs. N. promises to see if the bales have provided anything so cheerful, and the petitioners retire in good spirits, pleased with their success, and with having seen "the babies." Georgie has watched the scene attentively, and presently marches in with a shawl over her head, and an old moccasin in her hand, announcing, "Please ma'am, I've brought you some shoes," and the whole performance is gone solemnly through. The Indians, men and women, seem much pleased to see the children when they come on their errands, and fervently kiss the tiny hands, the babies making no objection to the blackest faces; only one day, when a poor woman waxed unusually demonstrative, and kissed Georgie's *face*, the child was seen to turn away and rub the saluted cheek with her pinafore, remarking, "She gave me a dirty kiss!"

We need not repeat here how splendidly the Missionary Leaves contributions provided the two Christmas trees, nor what joy they gave to all the children of Moose. All the little ones we have been telling of attend the English school, and so shared in the Christmas tree, and received toys or work materials; the Indians were most thankful for warm clothing. The same bales provided bright patches, thimbles, etc., for the Sewing Class, Indian girls sitting down one side of the school, and taught mostly by kind Mrs. Taylor from the factory, who speaks Indian perfectly, English girls on the other side taught by Mrs. Newnham. There were some red and blue composition thimbles, and it was comical to see Janie reject a suitable steel one and don a huge blue one, which delighted her eyes, and joyfully assure one, as it spun round on her finger, "It just fits!" They all love this class, and the Indians are very clever with fingers, not only falling soon into neat plain sewing, but Mary Anderson and some others doing beautiful button-holes. We made them ask for cotton, etc., in English, over which they were very shy; yet when we met a troop out, emboldened by numbers, they would chorus: "Good afterr-noon," instead of the regulation "What cheer?" One responded to a farewell, early in the afternoon, with "Good-night," and then hid behind her companion in an access of shyness. They fill up the

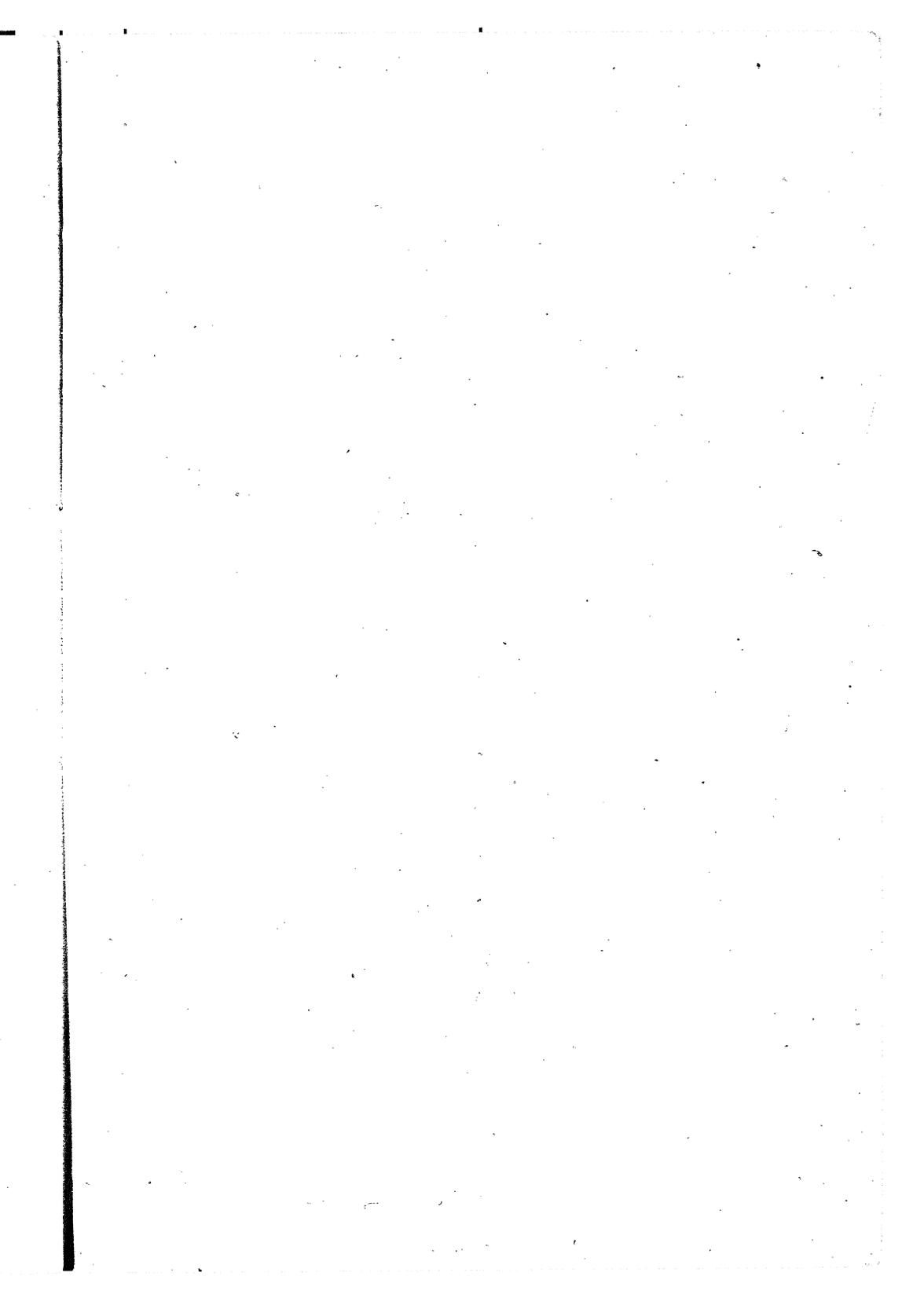
time, whilst waiting for school to open, with walking up and down on the highest fence-rails, balancing themselves capitably.

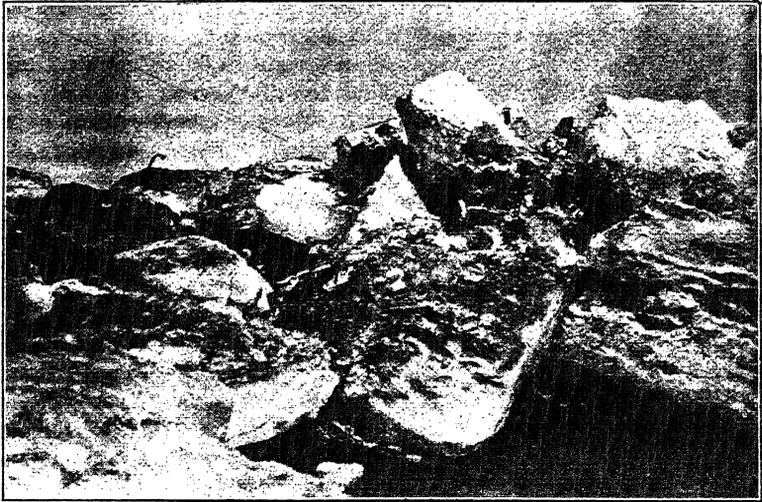
As January was passing, the weather was bitterly cold by spells, and it was terrible to see the chilled look on the little faces in school, and hear the cry, "Miss, Miss, I'm freezin'," then a chorus, "I'm freezin', me too!" A roaring fire was kept going in the stove, and the children seated near it in turns, thus warming them in rotation, but the effect was doubtful, to say the least. At 11 o'clock, Rev. I. Taylor would make a break, and put them through some very lively exercises, "Mark time, double," and so forth, which cheered them much, but the piercing wind found its way through the joints of the shrinking boards, and *warmth* was unattainable. At times, ice would remain on the floor under the stove almost the entire morning, and one had to stand the slates round against the stove to thaw them before using. One could only give clothing where it seemed most urgently needed, and make an effort to present the lessons in a more attractive form, so as to distract the children's thoughts from their discomforts. The Bible Lessons were still the greatest help, and the questions asked showed a keen interest in and grasp of the story. For instance, the question of Total Abstinence having come before people's minds of late, owing to the "Try Society" and other circumstances, one boy was desperately anxious to know if Job's sons had beer at their feasts! and they all asked if "Job's boys hauled for him with the oxen!" Frank, the nine-year-old, who is so taken up with the beer question, is specially quick and absorbed in the subjects, and never forgets a story. He is the dearest boy, with such an honest look in his hazel eyes, and such an odd lateral wriggle of his chin when reproved, which is fairly often—for he is a great wag, and much given to disturbing conversation during school-hours. When he heard that some men disapproved of Saul's appointment as king, he indignantly suggested that "they should be kicked out of the service!" The story of David and Goliath took their imagination by storm; they wished to know whether Goliath's challenge was given in English, or did he speak Indian! and the next morning when school assembled, Tom announced, "We've been playing, John was the giant, Johnnie was David, and we was Israelites!" Mercifully, the slinging part was not literally carried out, although they brought a deer-skin sling to show their teacher how such weapons were used in Moose.

The winter's cold proved too much for Frank's elder brother, and poor Phil was kept to his bed for weeks with an acute attack of a lung trouble, so common here, which had carried off two of his brothers.

He had far outgrown his strength, and was terribly weak, and looked like a wraith. It was very nice to see how his boy friends would visit him in their spare time ; and the Mission and the Factory people kept him supplied with what little dishes he was able to take ; and as the weather grew warmer he was able to creep outside again and amuse himself with "gardening" in old meat tins, which at that time became the rage among the smaller school-children—indeed, all ranks and all ages seemed beset by a wild longing to see something growing. It is impossible to understand, until one has experienced it, the utter desolation of the winter scene, the deadly monotony of looking out for six months without break on one great stretch of dazzling snow and ice, just bounded in the distance by the dark grey fringe of pine-bush ; for the river was frozen over by the end of October, and as we look across now, in the intense heat of May 25th, we can just see the last remaining traces of ice on the further shore ! The intense stillness of the winter, both to eye and ear, felt verily like death, and as the increasing sunshine awoke the Spring within one, a great craving for life and loveliness possessed one's whole being. Then was the worst time of heart hunger for home and home scenery. But our time of relief was at hand ; what must it be for Messrs. Peck and Parker, far north in Cumberland Sound, with no such summer in store for them ? Noble souls, *cheerfully* bearing so much that they may do the Master's will !

Well, the resurrection came at the end of April ; first, days of scorching sun, when the huge snow-drifts sank visibly, and to step outside the house meant testing the depth of the water anywhere between the height of one's shoes and the knee ; and inside the house was pretty bad, for the thaw brought the water streaming through the foundations and completely flooded the floor of the kitchen and the adjacent rooms. You might see George Spence in the morning carrying out the contribution from his bedroom by the pailful. Upstairs we did well enough, unless there was a heavy rain-storm, which would beat in under the roof and drip down on us ; and many an earnest wish was expressed for the building of the new house, whose foundation logs, as you know, had been spiked with a little school ceremony and prayer last Fall. We sincerely hope for the arrival of a carpenter from Canada, and funds from everywhere to make a wind- and water-tight abode for all the Mission Staff an accomplished fact ! But I have digressed. The Bishop has described at length the stages of the break-up ; there was life enough then, at any rate—great ice mountains rushing up into the air one after another till we could see quite a range, mercifully along the further uninhabited shore, where





ICE BLOCKS HURLED UP BY THE ICE-SHOVE, IN MAY, 1894.

the ice has left its traces in broken trees and ploughed-up banks in a way that makes us exceedingly thankful that the first break did not come at our bank, where the damage to property would have been terrible. Then a narrow channel opened down past our shore, and a bewildering, ceaseless procession of ice boulders came jostling and bumping down it at a great pace until it jammed just below the Factory. The water was at this time not many yards from our gate its rise had come very suddenly, the whole promontory of Mansey being submerged whilst we watched; it was a most curious experience, seeing mountains made and land disappear in that rapid fashion. The first rise came on a Saturday, and all the servants' families gathered their necessaries and departed at once to make sure of a refuge in the sheds, forge, and other available shelters "below," so that the Bishop's house and a few Indian dwellings were the only ones still occupied at this end of the island. But after five days of anxious waiting and watching, night and day, the ice forced for itself a way at the back of the island, and we awoke on the Thursday morning to find the broad river all sparkle and life in the sunshine for a mile and a half across from our windows.

Then did Dame Nature bestir herself to make up for lost time; she most assuredly gave all her children a *tremendous* washing, and then brought out her most effective winds and swept the whole place from north and south, east and west, thus rapidly clearing up the universal swamps, after which the adornment was accomplished as if by a fairy's wand, and we were picking violets in the bush exactly a fortnight after the opening of the river, and these were rapidly followed by primulas and a very pretty little orchis that the children call "Lady's Slipper," some of which Janie Turner brought as an offering to the Mission folk, planted in a tiny tin pail she had received off the Christmas tree; her mother, poor Rose, was very ill at the time of the flood alarm, and quite unfit for her move. Mrs. Newnham was so glad to make her a cup of good cocoa from time to time from the essence so kindly sent to the Mission by Messrs. Cadbury, a very acceptable contribution to our stores. The Bishop and Mrs. Newnham have long felt that Robbie, being a steady, good boy, and brought up under the prayerful influence of such a mother, might become in time one of the sorely-needed Mission workers in this diocese, his familiarity with Indian from childhood being an immense advantage to him. He is just fifteen years of age, as is also George Spence, who speaks the Brunswick House dialect as easily as English, and can understand a fair amount of Cree. Robbie's parents were only too pleased at such a prospect, although so distant a one, and

necessarily conditional. So the two boys get lessons from one of the Mission staff three evenings a week, after their day's work in garden or field is finished, and seem really to appreciate the trouble bestowed on them, and to have no wish to shirk the study, which is, of course, still very elementary. It is a most interesting and hopeful work, just trying to lay a solid foundation of teaching from the Bible and Prayer Book and the ordinary school studies—in fact, to give a training which will help them to be good and useful men. If God opens a way for them in the future, providing means to give them the education fitting for ordained missionaries, and if their conduct and progress justify the carrying out of this idea, it will be received as the answer to much prayer, and the fulfilment of an earnest desire of at least one of them.

The reviving springtime brought, perhaps, an increased restlessness into the bodies of our little scholars, and after ten minutes with a class one would be assailed with, "Miss, I'm tired settin', me," and the energies of the teacher are severely taxed in providing suitable occupation for the small folk. One amusing outlet for their energies was the way the boys raced for the Mission House at 9.30 every morning to secure the privilege of carrying over the teacher's paraphernalia, the girls having constituted themselves her escort home after school, not the least part of the treat being the brief interview thus secured with the Bishop's babies. The dear mites used to watch for the first glimpse of the girls, and smile at them in most friendly fashion, May especially. The first time they were found running about on the gallery, fastened in by an impromptu gate, Janie exclaimed with delight, "Why, they've got a cage!"

One very curious thing about the departure of the ice was the speedy appearance of the Indian hunters. Open water came, as you know, by the Thursday morning, and by mid-day we heard salutes fired round the bend of the river, and some half-dozen canoes came swinging down, bringing the Indian contingent belonging to a small winter post. The Bishop and Mrs. Newnham went down at once to the bank to shake hands and "What cheer?" them all as they landed, and inquire of their welfare. From this time the arrivals were noted day by day, as the families came in from their lonely winter life, and set up their wigwams about the green at the island head. Once more the camp fires glowed within sight of our windows, once more the singing of the evening hymns came to us on the still air, once more the shout of the children was heard as they disported themselves in the ponds left everywhere round by the flood, and, alas! as they made

forced entrances into the Bishop's boat house or destroyed his cherished potato vault by sliding down from its summit !

The hunters brought in many fine furs and enormous bundles of rabbit skins, on the contents of which they had been feasting all winter. It was wonderful how few troubles were reported after these months. One poor young couple had lost their baby, and it was dreadful to hear that the only way to give it burial—the ground all round being as hard as a rock—was for the parents to break up the earth inside their tent, where it was thawed by their own camp fires ! But the most pitiful tale was that of poor Tom Parrs, who had been brought up by Peter and Harriet Kacheche. Rev. I. J. Taylor had married him to a girl named Flora last autumn, and they had spent the whole winter together in the woods ; when the water opened, they started up a rather dangerous branch of the river to fetch some furs from a *câche* they had made, preparatory to returning to Moose. Coming to a fallen tree across their course, Flora, who was paddling at the bow, got the canoe under safely, but was unable to keep the bow straight whilst her husband followed, the canoe was upset, they both held on to it, and were swept rapidly down stream ; but the icy water benumbed them, and they could not maintain their hold. Poor Tom did not even know when his wife let go ; but when he gave up exhausted, he found he could touch bottom, and so reached the bank. He made his way back to their last camping ground, and there dried himself at the still burning embers of their last fire ! Some passing Indians noticed his fire and found him in a half-dazed condition, and brought him on to Moose. The news was carried to the Bishop, and he hurried at once to the bank, to speak what comfort he could to poor Tom, who was sitting on some logs, sobbing, with friends standing sadly about him, whilst the sound of wailing was heard from neighbouring tents. It was a sorrowful event, and the body has not been recovered, so she could not even have Christian burial.

As a sequence of the return of the Indians the Bishop has begun again the summer work—daily evening Indian service, day schools, all his visiting amongst the tents (resulting, horror of horrors ! in occasional *most* unwelcome visitors in the Mission House !), and the English Sewing Class has now to be given up that all our attention may be devoted to the many Indian girls whose only chance of learning is through the summer.

The usual contributions towards the church were asked for when the congregation was once more full, that they might have an opportunity of giving before they had taken from the shop the full value of their fur harvest, for Indians are most improvident, they find

it impossible ever to "keep a margin." Many gave well, according to their means; good Harriet Kacheche had just earned four beaver by extra hard work at the Factory, and of this she put a paper for half beaver into the plate—surely she will not lose her reward. She is looking very thin and worn just now, as are many both white and brown, some of the children have quite a pinched look, poor little souls! for it is the time of scarcity now, hardly any animals to be had, and a diet of salt meat (the fresh beef all being carefully used up before the thaw makes keeping it impossible) and "cake," the flour and grease substitute for bread, not being conducive to health in any, especially the children. And here let me say that a most important part of Mrs. Newnham's work, although a part that makes no show, is the careful and constant thought she gives to the diet of the whole Mission Staff in a country where fresh wholesome food is often almost unattainable, and the preserving of what we do get is most difficult, owing to climate, lack of house-room, etc. Her reward is the general splendid health of her large family, from the Bishop to the plump, sturdy, twin girlies, their general immunity from the epidemics, and so their increased power for usefulness, present or future.

The need of more workers is most pressing; there is no Mission worker at all at New Post, nor could the people there be even visited last year; the Bishop has sent them books when opportunity offered, but anything more was impossible until this spring, when it was arranged that Mr. Taylor should go up by canoe. He left us May 19th, all the school-children and the Indians from the tents lining the bank to watch his departure. Good old Henry Liesk went with him as guide and interpreter; they hoped to reach the Post by Saturday, so being in time to give the poor people the rare privilege of the Church Services on Whitsun Day. Constant prayer is offered that the week there may be full of blessing and strengthening to those who must again be left for many, many months without any teacher. Do you at home, with your abundance of Christian privileges, begin to realise the feelings of a Bishop placed in charge of all these poor souls, yet without men or means to send a teacher even once a year? Do you think what it is for the Officer in charge at New Post to be 140 miles from the nearest church? How can you expect good lives from those who have no chance of hearing of God's love and God's will? Here is an Indian girl from the Rupert's House District; she has not lived in the settlement itself, where the Rev. E. Richards, an Indian, is at work, so has had no real teaching. She comes to live with Rose, to do the hard work of the house, but she is full of wild ways; Rose talks to her, and the girl admits having heard of God

and of Jesus, but she never "knew that Jesus had suffered so for her, or that it hurt Him when she wandered about at night and went into bad company ; now she knew, she would not do it again." Rose tries to overcome her shyness about going to Sunday school that she may get regular teaching in Sam's class. This is the sort of Indian that very often has to be reported as "Baptised Christian," since their parents will make the effort to bring the babies enormous distances to be baptised, yet have to live out of reach of any teaching.

Archdeacon Vincent has been opening up a new mission in his district, Albany ; the young native deacon, Richard Faries, being the only worker besides himself in the whole district, and he is stationed at Fort Hope, a most trying and isolated position for one so young and inexperienced, but what else can be done? Many of the Indians have been reached by the Archdeacon in his summer voyagings, and he is building churches for them ; but as this part has never been opened up before they have never been visited by their Bishop, so it was promised that when Bishop Newnham had accomplished his arduous task of last summer (visiting the Churchill and Severn districts), he would give a season to Albany. He plans, therefore, leaving his home at the end of June, and, taking to the river at Albany with the Archdeacon, canoeing up through the bush, holding suitable services wherever Indians are to be found, until they come out at the Canadian Pacific Railway line, which will bring them to a point from which they can make a much shorter return journey. As they will be thus near Winnipeg at the time of the General Synod, they purpose attending that, and bringing the claims of the Moosonee Mission once more before the Canadian Church, before they start homewards again in time for the winter work. The following summer there is all the Eastern Coast crying out for a visitation, so a missionary Bishop does not get too much of his home-life ! Your prayers are earnestly asked that the power of the Holy Spirit may rest on him, and flow from him in all this work ; and that God will bless the services more abundantly in proportion to their rarity, and raise up Spirit-taught, energetic workers (there is no "royal road" to successful work in Moosonee !) to fill the many gaps. You will not, we know, forget to ask for his safety through the hundreds of miles of voyaging, nor for the strengthening and comforting of his wife in her share of work and anxiety through these months of trying separation.

CONTRIBUTIONS for work among the Indians in the Diocese of Moosonee, or for the Bishop's new house, will be thankfully received by the Bishop's Commissary,

REV. A. J. BEGBIE,

Horton Vicarage,

Chipping Sodbury.

Extra copies of this Pamphlet can be had from

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