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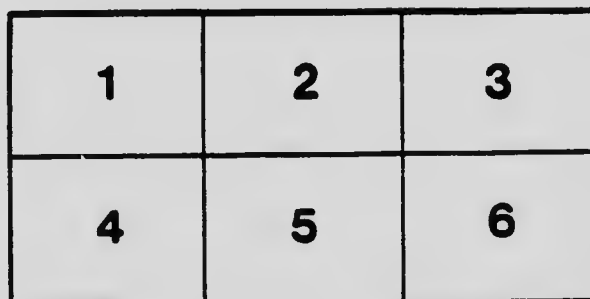
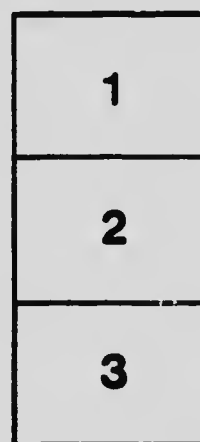
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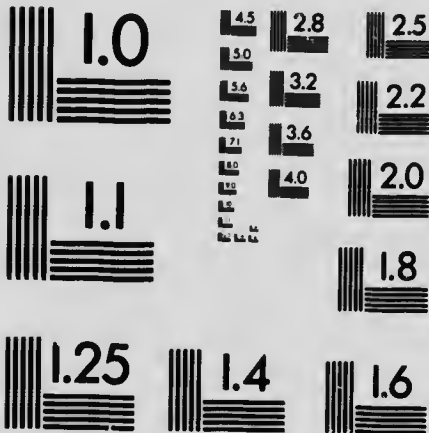
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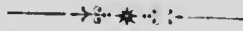


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**THE
MACKENZIE
RIVER
DIOCESE.**



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THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP REEVE

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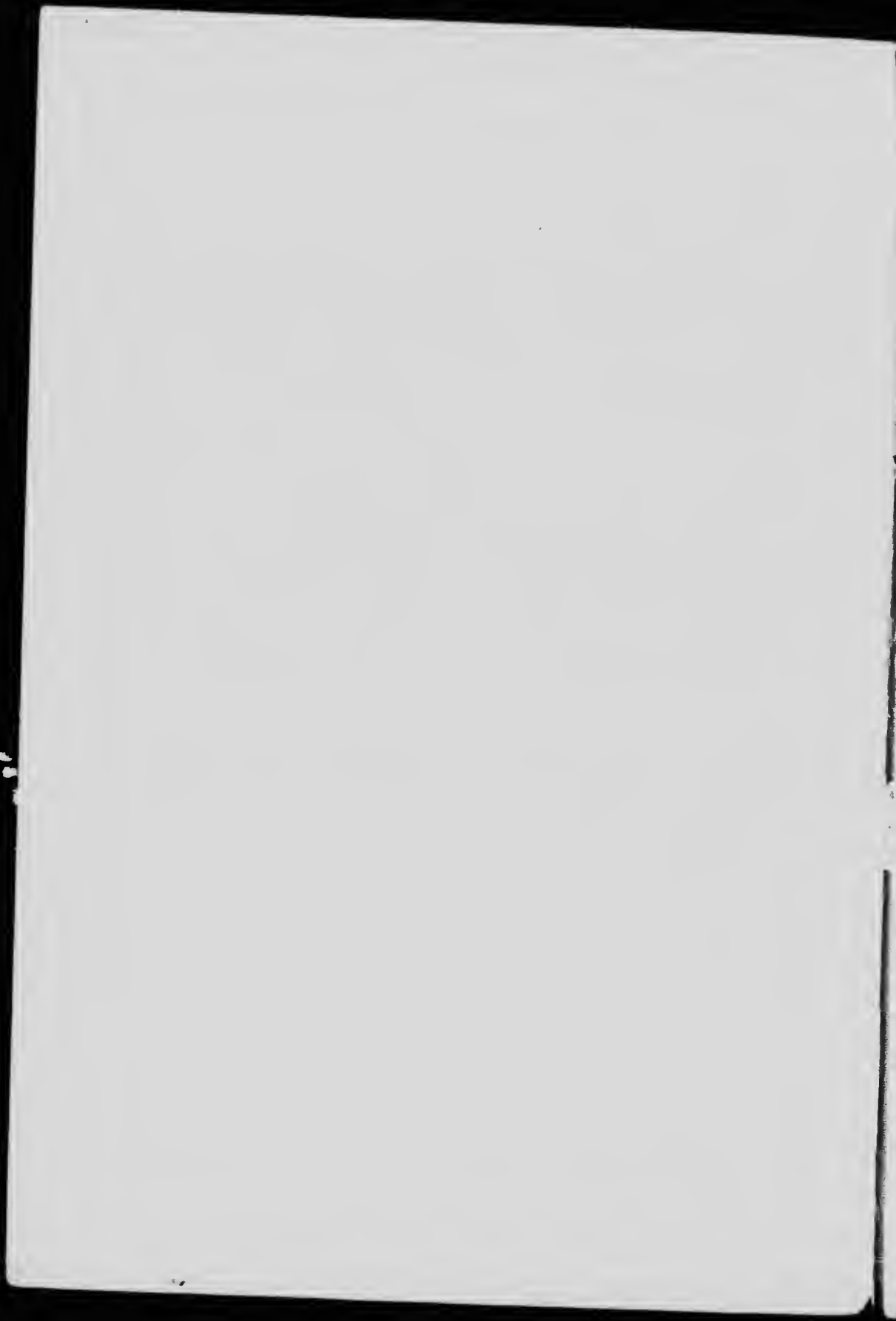


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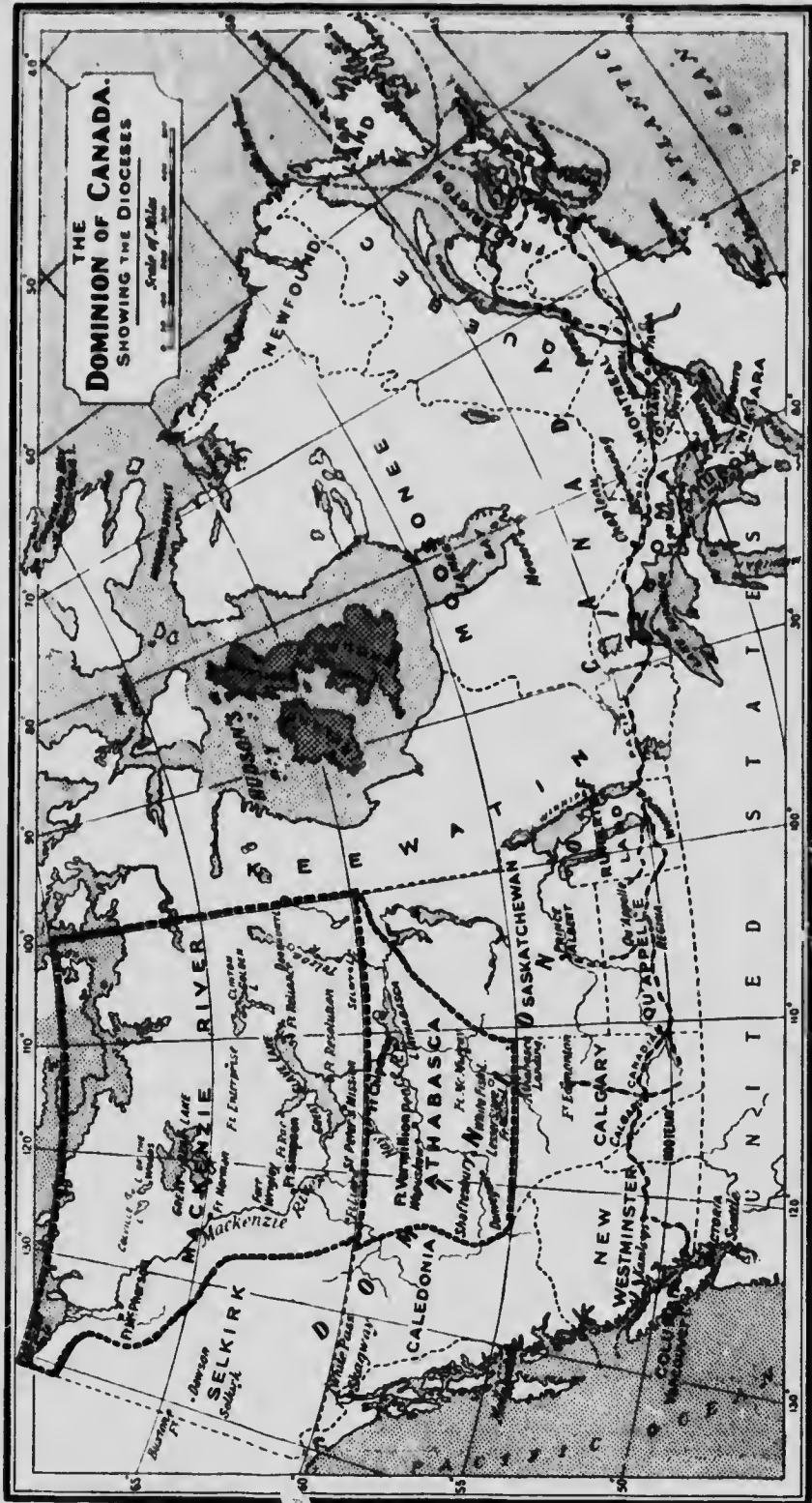
THE MISSIONS
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The Mackenzie River Diocese.

Notes by
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1903.



[The Map of the United Kingdom on the same scale has been inserted to show how vast are the distances to be traversed.]

The Mackenzie River Diocese.

“**A** FEW scattered sheep in a wilderness” well describes the flock which has to be shepherded in the Diocese of Mackenzie River. The sheep are few in number, and are scattered over a vast extent of territory. The territory is a wilderness. It is to be found in the far north-west corner of Canada. Its boundaries stretch nearly to Hudson’s Bay on the east, to the Rocky Mountains on the west, and into the Arctic Ocean on the north. It embraces an area of more than half a million square miles, and some of its Missions are the farthest north of any in the British Empire. In March, when the days are the same length all over the world, people living on the eastern border of the diocese see the sun more than two hours sooner than those who dwell in the far north-west corner. During the winter, at the latter place, the sun is not seen at all for about two months ; but in summer it is in view all the twenty-four hours round for about the same length of time. In this vast country (ten times the size of England), on the shores of its huge lakes, on the banks of its mighty river, in the depths of its primeval forests, amidst the dreary desolation of the barren lands, and on the wind-swept solitudes of the Arctic Coast, scattered



THE MISSION-HOUSE, HERSCHEL ISLAND, THE NORTHERNMOST STATION IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

here and there in small parties, and wandering about in search of food, the sheep, about five thousand in number, have to be shepherded. The mission stations are from eighty to nearly five hundred miles apart. To visit each of these would occupy the Bishop more than a year, and he would have to travel about four thousand miles.

The people are of different races and tribes, having different languages. There are a few white people, more half-breeds, still more Eskimo, and Indians most of all. Of the last there are several tribes—Chipewyan, Yellow Knife, Dog Rib, Beaver, Sikany, Slavi, Mountain, Hare, Nehany, and Tukudh. Each tribe has a dialect of its own, and the language of the Indians is quite unlike that of the Eskimo. All the Indians are now nominally Christians, but most of them are Roman Catholic. The

Eskimo are still Heathen. To look after the latter and the Indians (less than a thousand belong to our Church), there are the Bishop, two English, three Canadian, one country-born, and two native clergymen and their wives, six native catechists, and several lay helpers, including ladies.

Owing to the nomadic habits of the Natives it is not easy to reach and teach them. At certain times in the year they come to the trading posts to barter their furs, which gives



GROUP OF MISSIONARIES AT HERSCHEL ISLAND.
The Rev. and Mrs. I. O. Stringer, Mr. Young, and Archdeacon McDonald.

the missionary an opportunity of ministering to them. At other times he must go to them, and, as there are no horses or roads, no railways or trams, this is often difficult.

Travelling in winter is accomplished on snow-shoes and by dog-train. The dogs, four in number, are harnessed tandem fashion to a flat-bottomed sleigh, on which are packed food for the journey for both men and dogs, kettles in which to cook it, axes wherewith to cut down the wood for making a fire, blankets wherein to sleep at night, extra clothing, and as little as possible of other necessaries, because every additional pound weight makes it all the harder for the dogs to draw the load. The missionary walks behind and drives his train by means of his voice and a long-lashed whip; his companion goes ahead and treads down the snow with his snow-shoes, making a track for the dogs to follow. When dinner-time comes a halt is called, a fire made, the tea-kettle boiled, and the food prepared and eaten in the open air, after which the journey is continued, with a few minutes' rest at intervals, until sunset. Then the same process is repeated, with the addition of making a bed in the snow, and sleeping there as comfortably (or uncomfortably) as the cold and other circumstances permit. This goes on, day after day, until the destination is reached, and, perhaps, during a week's journey not a single human being is met! The writer once travelled 160 miles as thus described, walking every step of the way, in order to visit a sick woman, and administer to her the Holy Communion; and much longer journeys than this have been taken.

As a rule both Indians and Eskimo are glad to receive such visits. They give the missionary a hearty welcome, allot him the warmest place at the fireside, give him the best of their food, and lend a willing ear to what he has to say. Sometimes the visit is cut short through lack of food,



MAIL CARRIERS AND OUTFIT ARRIVING AT HERSCHEL ISLAND.

or inability to endure the cold, or it may extend to weeks, or even months, the missionary moving about with his flock as the need of food or other causes compel.

In summer the mode of travelling is very different. It is now mostly done by steamer, but birch-bark canoes and small boats are still much used. A few years ago the writer steered a boat during the greater part of a six weeks' journey of 1,000 miles. A little later he paddled his own canoe more than 300 miles, and was quite alone the greater part of the way. Travelling in this way is not so tiring as snow-shoe walking, but the mosquitoes make it very trying. They swarm in myriads for nearly three months, and make life in the open air almost unbearable.

Food is another difficulty, and almost a chronic one.

There are no butchers, bakers, or provision dealers. The missionary, therefore, has to live chiefly upon food obtainable in the country, such as fish, rabbits, reindeer, moose deer, wild fowl, and sometimes even bear, beaver, wild cat, musk, rat, seal, and whale ! As a rule, if one kind of food fails another is plentiful ; but sometimes there is great scarcity all round, and then woeful destitution prevails. Scores of deaths from starvation have occurred amongst the Indians ; and even the missionaries and their wives and little children have suffered the pangs of hunger for weeks together. Over and over again this "adversary" has stood in the way, and interfered with the missionary carrying on his work.

For many years it prevented the starting of a boarding-school for Indian children, but now that it has to some extent been overcome, a home has been established at Hay River, where some forty or more boys and girls are being fed, clothed, and educated. They are being well taught, and are making remarkably good progress. It is hoped that



GROUP OF CHRISTIANS, FORT NORMAN.



C.M.S. MISSION, FORT NORMAN.

when the time comes for them to leave school they will carry the instruction they have received to their homes in the woods, and be little missionaries themselves to their friends and relatives. News has recently arrived of an outbreak of measles among them, causing five deaths. This is very sad, and has been a great strain upon the school staff. One of them writes, "I hope you will be able to stir up a greater interest in our missions, so that people may not only give of their means, but give themselves, for we need help very badly. Surely, if this is God's work, He will give us the means to carry it on; and yet I cannot think it right for missionaries to have to work as hard as we do. For days this summer I have not had time to read a chapter in my Bible. A verse from my day-book was as much as I could manage; and more than one of the staff on more than one occasion have fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion when they knelt down to ask the care and protection of their Heavenly Father for the night. Surely the Lord means us to feed our own souls, or how shall we be

able to feed others? Surely, if God's people knew of these things some one would come and help us."

Lack of men and means is another adversary.



THE REV. W. SPENDLOVE IN INDIAN TRAVELLING DRESS.

Having often no assistant the missionary has to be not only pastor, evangelist, and schoolmaster, but also doctor, gardener (when he is able to have a garden), hewer of

wood and drawer of water, Jack of all trades, and general factotum. Does the fence need repairing? Is the door latch out of order? Is there a broken window? Is another shelf required? Are the stove-pipes choked with soot? Is the dog-harness in need of repair? Are there a thousand and one things about the place to be done? The missionary (or his wife) has to do them. Is someone sick? The missionary (or his wife) is the doctor; and many a poor



AN ESKIMO CHIEF AND HIS WIFE.

sufferer has been relieved, and not a few lives have been saved (under God), through their ministrations.

Has any good been done? Most decidedly there has. There is an advance in morality, a better observance of the Lord's Day, an earnest desire on the part of many to lead godly lives, a large increase in the number of communicants, better attendance at church, a greater desire for Christian instruction, and a greater willingness to part with their children to send them away to school. Infanticide, once

common, is now almost unheard of. Bigamy is a thing of the past. Murder is almost unknown. The aged are cared for instead of being left to perish. Christian teaching and influence are having their effect upon the Eskimo. Amongst the Tukudh Indians three of their number have been ordained deacons. The whole Bible in Tukudh, and the New Testament in Slavi, as well as other books have been printed. These are only some of the results.

A word or two must be said about the Eskimo.

It is a curious fact that the Eskimo of this diocese are much taller than those of Labrador and Greenland, most of the men being of or above average height. Their home is the Arctic Coast, which they seldom leave, and where they obtain a somewhat precarious livelihood by hunting, fishing, whaling, and trapping foxes, &c. On the whole they are more provident than the neighbouring Indians, exercising greater forethought with regard to food, clothing, hunting equipment, &c. There are several tribes, and as many dialects, the latter being very different from the Eastern language, and also from that spoken on Behring's Straits.

The term Eskimo, or Esquimaux, which means "eaters of raw flesh," is not their own designation. Their own name is Innuvit, which means "The People!" A large number have been attracted to Herschel Island since the Americans established a whaling station there, and it has since become the headquarters of the Mission. It is the most remote inhabited spot in the British Empire, and the Mission is the farthest north of any connected with our Church. It is more than two thousand miles from the nearest post-office, and much farther from a grocer's shop. Consequently the mails are few and far between, seldom more than two in the year, and the news is somewhat old by the time it reaches that dreary island. How welcome it is when it does come,

only those can understand who have been placed in similar circumstances.

It was long after the Gospel had been accepted by the Indians before anything much could be done amongst these Eskimo. More than thirty years ago Bishop Bompas spent a few weeks with them in their snow houses on the frozen ocean. Our veteran Archdeacon (who has been labouring



GROUP OF ESKIMO.

amongst the Indians more than half a century) tried to impart to them a little instruction when they came to Fort McPherson. The Rev. T. H. Canham was sent out specially for them ; but the time had not yet come for the opening out of work in those icy regions. At length, however, when the American whalers invaded those frozen solitudes, it became possible for a missionary to reside there. The Rev. I. O. Stringer was the first to do so. After a few years

he wrote :—" Many of the Eskimo are apparently becoming more civilized, and are greatly improving in their manners and habits. They are very much kinder, and, I think, their confidence in us is increasing." Of this, in the writer's opinion, there can be no doubt. Unfortunately, the Americans have introduced liquor amongst them, and have taught them how to make an intoxicant. This, it is feared, will be a great hindrance to the progress of the Gospel, and much prayer, patience, and wisdom will be needed to counteract its influence, which has already been productive of much evil. The door is now open. How important that it be taken advantage of to the fullest extent ! It may not be open long. The whalers are leaving, and the Mission may have to be abandoned.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Stringer have suffered much with their eyes, and have had to go home to Ontario for medical aid, and it is feared they will not be able to return. In the meantime the Rev. and Mrs. C. E. Whittaker are nobly "holding the fort," and need the prayers of all God's people to support them. How much those prayers are needed the following extract from his letter will show :—" The chief from Kittygagzooit came here about New Year's Day with several members of his party, and their families. Their whale fishery failed last summer, and they came here, I believe, with the express purpose of squeezing us. . . . [One day] the chief came in [the house] with a lot of his people, and calling Mr.



A CHRISTIAN INDIAN
WOMAN.

Young [the lay helper] out from supper, to the school-room, without a word, took him by the throat. What his intentions were we cannot know, but they were evidently not good, for they have no sense of humour. . . . Mrs. W. got a terrible fright. On her account, and I believe on that alone, the chief desisted, and allowed explanation. She begged him for her sake, and the children's,



AN INDIAN SUMMER CAMP.

not to make trouble, and what would, I fear, have been a serious affair, was smoothed over. . . . Another man got suddenly vexed the other day, and snatching an axe, tried to brain me, but I shut a door in his face, and so his intention miscarried."

Thievish, murderous, treacherous, revengeful, they are not a safe people to live amongst; and neither amongst them, nor amongst the Indians, is the work easy. The cold, the food, the dirt, the insects, the isolation, and many

other things are very trying, but the love of Christ constrains and sustains, and all are endured for His sake; and to know that one's "labour is not in vain in the Lord" makes up for all the disagreeablenesses. And to be "witness" for Him in "the uttermost part of the earth" is surely a high honour.

TESTIMONIES OF TRAVELLERS TO THE REALITY OF THE WORK.

In a review of the work a few years ago Bishop Reeve quoted the unbiassed testimony of four different persons—two military officers, a doctor, and an ex-mayor—concerning the Mission and the character of the converts, adding that he omitted much more which is too laudatory for repetition. The testimonies quoted are as follows:—

"As an instance of how goods can be left unmolested anywhere, that is, *cached*, a quantity of flour was left along the river bank, where it must have been seen by dozens of Indians, and although it remained there eighteen months, it was not disturbed."

"Mr. and Mrs. Marsh and assistants are doing a good work at this distant Mission of the Church [Hay River], and I tell you they deserve the sympathy of all Christian people in the work they are doing in this Mission among these poor, miserable Natives. Mr. Marsh has been six years amongst these people working hard; has a school and Mission where he cares for between ten and twenty native children, clothing, feeding, and teaching them. He has a fine garden, and is teaching the Natives many industrious habits; but, oh! what a sacrifice to live amongst those poor, degraded, low, filthy, indolent folk!"

"There is a fine Mission here, with 120 communicants, so that you see through the good work down here [Fort McPherson] by these missionaries many of these wild men of the woods have been brought to a knowledge of the truth."


"It has been my great pleasure not only to meet the Indians, but to attend their services; and though unacquainted with the language, I was struck to a marked extent by the impressiveness of the Indians and the great fervour with which the Indian preachers emphasized their discourses—a very sufficient proof of the good work carried out. . . . Of Mr. Stringer I cannot say too much. A more devout, God-fearing, and hard-working man I have hardly met, and those from St. Michael's who are here say that there the Eskimo, the whalers, and the officers of the revenue cutters are loud in his praises."

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