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SKETCH

OF THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

METLAHKATLAH,

IN THE DIOCESE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BY THE

VERY REV. EDWARD CRIDGE, M.A.,

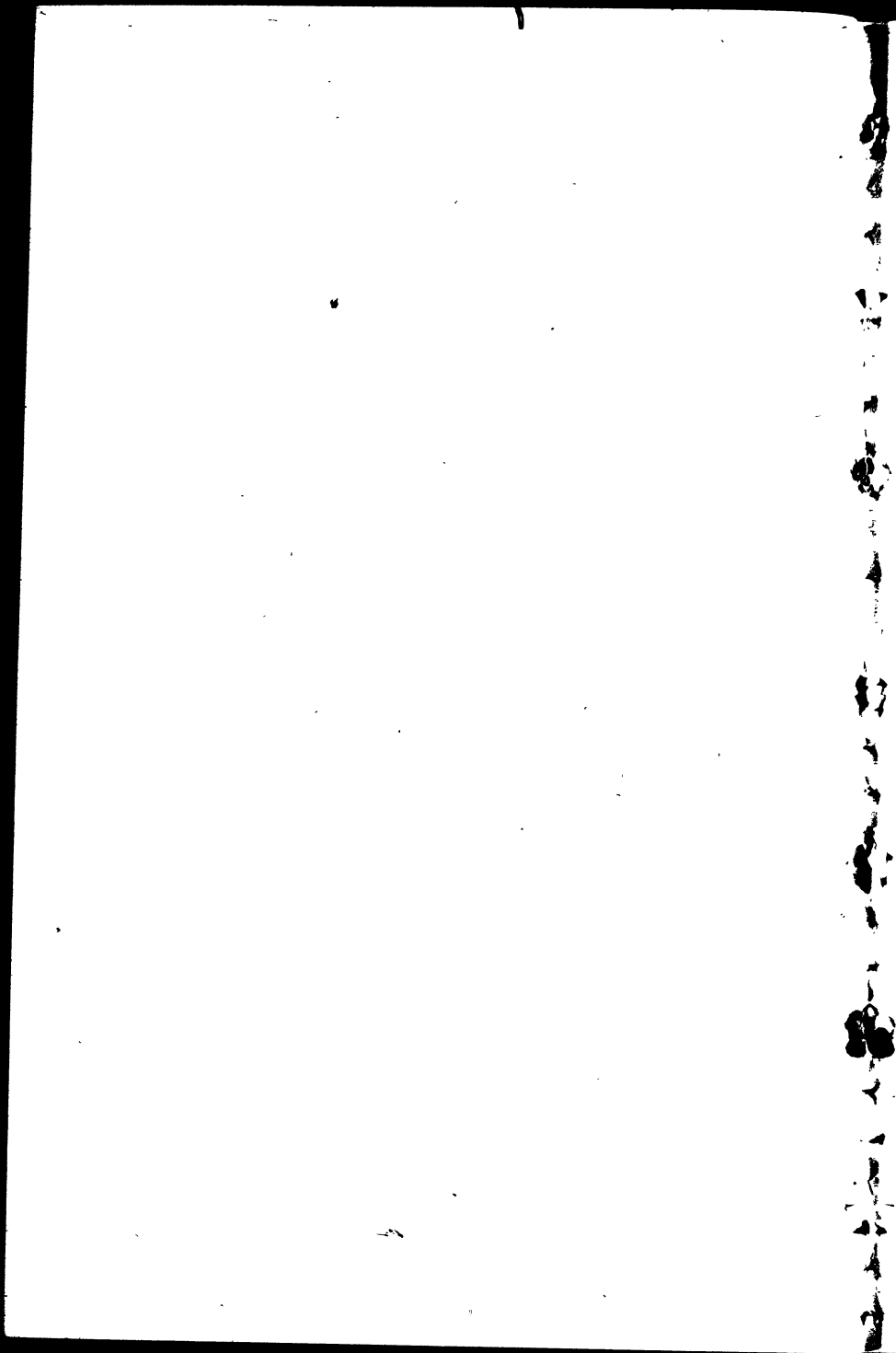
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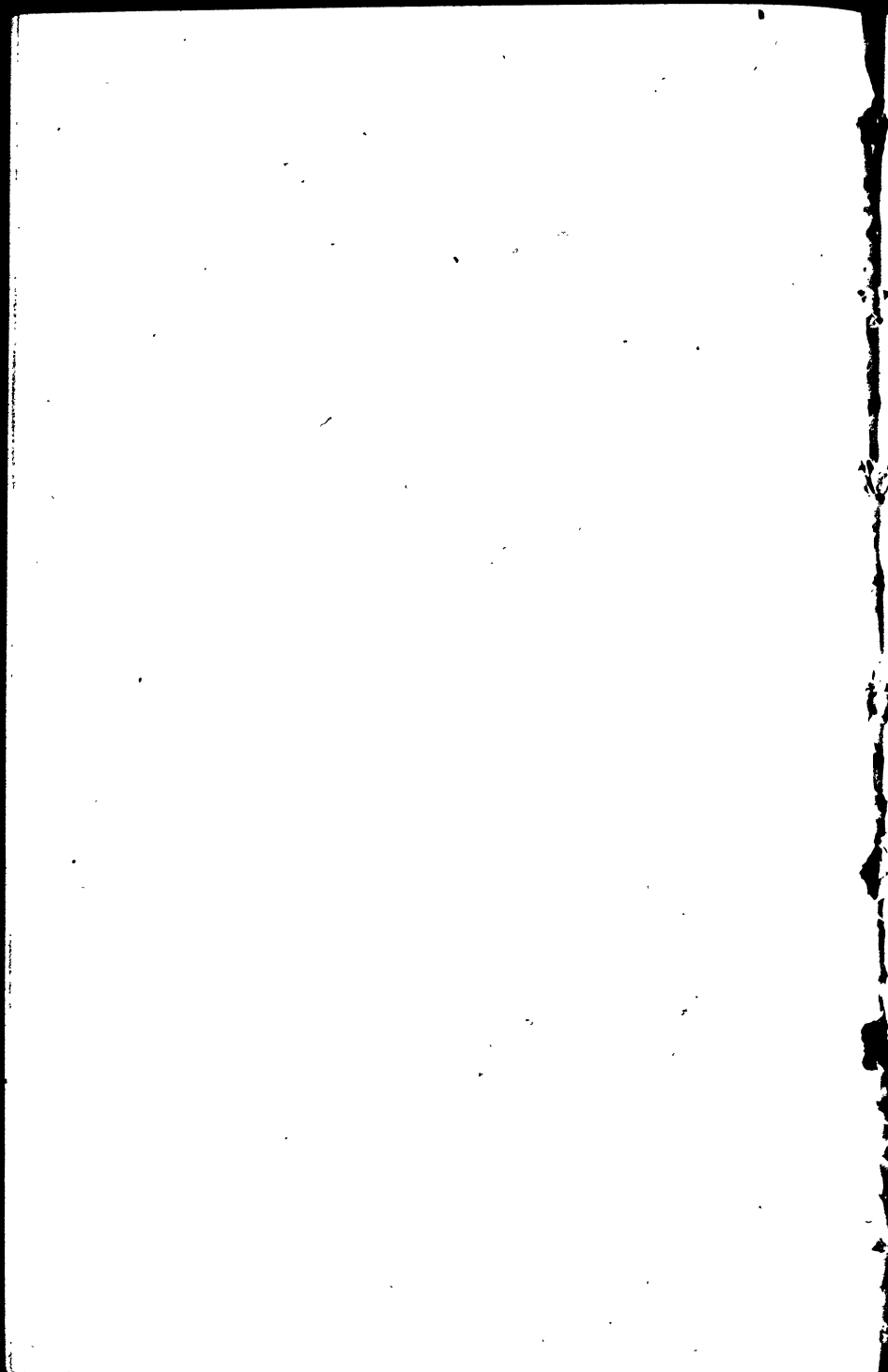


PREFACE.

IN issuing a "Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Metlahkatlah," it is right to state that the epistolary form of the pamphlet arises from the fact that the Dean of Victoria, British Columbia, communicated his views of the Metlahkatlah Mission to the Committee of the Church Missionary Society by letter, after he had spent seven weeks at the station. The visit was undertaken at the request of the Lord Bishop of British Columbia, and it is almost needless to state that the narrative was simply transmitted by Dean Cridge for the information of the Committee, and not with any view to publication.

The Committee trust that the brief, but graphic account given of this Mission will strengthen the conviction that great blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, result from the Missionary labour of the present age.

The Bishop of Columbia, after a personal inspection of the Metlahkatlah Mission, was desirous of admitting Mr. Duncan to Holy Orders. At that time the offer of ordination was not accepted, but the Committee are now able to state that Mr. Duncan has prepared himself as a candidate for ordination, and has been accepted by the Bishop.



S K E T C H
OF THE
RISE AND PROGRESS OF METLAHKATLAH,
BRITISH COLUMBIA.

AFTER ten years' acquaintance with my dear Christian friend and brother, Mr. Duncan, and many communications with him on the subject of his work, I have been at length permitted by a kind Providence to see with my own eyes that which God hath wrought by him. I have spent about seven weeks in the Mission, and now, on the eve of my departure, I address myself to the pleasing task of writing to you. Although I shall doubtless touch on many things already known, I shall not, therefore, forbear, so far as the limits of a letter will allow, to record my impressions on all things relating to the Mission.

Seven weeks at Metlahkatlah.

I can scarcely realise that the spot on which I am now writing, amid the tokens of Christianity and civilization, was, not many years ago, the scene of heathen riot and bloodshed; and will be, we trust, the Zion from which the word of the Lord will go forth for the salvation of many of the surrounding tribes.

Difficulty in realizing the change caused by Missionary labour

The spiritual results of ten years' labours are manifested in a congregation of some 400 adults, of whom about 300 have been baptized, and will become communicants so soon as the order of the Church shall be fully established. To this congregation Mr. Duncan delivers three discourses every Lord's Day, in the native tongue, which he speaks with wonderful facility. It is affecting to witness the apparent devotion of this congregation, and to hear them singing hymns to the Redeemer's praise with a melody and heartiness which are rarely surpassed in congregations at home. This body are, apparently, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and adorning by a consistent life the doctrine of God their Saviour. Many belonging to the surrounding tribes have heard the Word, and though they have not yet come out as Christians, the good seed, we may hope, is sown, and prepared in God's good time to spring forth for the further extension of His kingdom. In the examination

Spiritual results.

Depth and reality of the work.

of above a hundred candidates for baptism, as well as in other matters, I have been impressed with the depth and reality of the work. This had been, indeed, the most interesting and important feature of my visit. Of 112 candidates who presented themselves, I accepted ninety-six. These, together with eighteen infants, were, with one exception, all baptized on one day, and constituted the largest accession to the Metlahkatlah Church which has yet been made. I wish I could give you more copious extracts from my notes of the examinations, which presented

Aged candidates for baptism.

many deeply-interesting cases. A striking feature was the number of elderly persons who presented themselves, twenty-six being over fifty years of age; falsifying the statement of an unbelieving Tsimshean (my *compagnon de voyage*) who, when we came in sight of the Christian village, said contemptuously, "They are only boys at Metlahkatlah." It was affecting to hear these candidates state their reasons for coming forward. Fear of longer delay was prominent. One seemed to see the very fire of hell before him. Others had seen all their relatives enter into the kingdom of God before them. Some, though unbaptized, had evidently been long communing with God.

A candidate of 65 years of age.

One man, aged sixty-five, in the voluntary statement with which, at our request, each candidate prefaced his confession, and from which I shaped my subsequent questions, said—"I feel like an infant, not able to say much; but I know that my heart is turned to God, and that He has given His Son to wash away my sins in His blood." Another, a woman aged seventy-five, said—"My sins have stood in my way: I wish to put them off. I believe in Jesus." There was great anxiety among all the candidates to be baptized, and it was affecting to see the sorrow of those who were deferred. It was a pleasing sight to see the troops of little children, boys and girls, from seven to ten years, neatly dressed and clean, coming forward to be examined. Being too old for infant and too young for adult baptism, we could only dismiss them with encouraging words.

Another aged 75.

Doubtless many of the Metlahkatlah Church as yet are only as babes in Christ, requiring the constant nurture of the Word, and the Shepherd's watchful care; yet we may indulge the hope that God, having begun a good work in them, will perform it to the end. Signs of stability and self-reliance are not wanting. They gather themselves for prayer at home and abroad; they

Signs of stability and self-reliance.

withstand the solicitations of their heathen acquaintances; they are not now ashamed, for they are the stronger party, feeling themselves to belong to Him before whose word the strongholds of Satan have been compelled to bow. There is growth—there is no retrogression; or, if an individual lapses, he finds himself in the wretched situation of possessing the confidence of neither the Church nor the world. Thanks be to Him who in His own time has seen fit to bring forth an elect remnant from a benighted people to the praise of the glory of His grace.

Growth,
but no
retrogression.

There is, however, a feature of the work of the Metlahkatlah Mission which has struck me forcibly, and on which—being, I think, rather uncommon—you will, I trust, allow me a little to dwell, namely, the temporal elevation of the people, and their advancement in civilization; results which are not the product of chance, or the necessary fruit of the work, but of deliberate arrangement and strenuous effort, even as a vessel among the reefs and breakers is warped to bring it into the open sea.

Temporal
elevation
of the
people.

The site of Metlahkatlah, the removal of the little church to which was the first essential step in this process, is happily chosen. It was the ancient winter station of the Tsimshean tribes. Large and lofty islands, some fifteen or twenty miles distant, form a breakwater against the violence of the Pacific Ocean. In front of the village is another island, forming an open channel, about half a mile wide, beautifully studded with smaller islands, on which are situated the gardens of the inhabitants. Gentle slopes in the rear are capable of being converted into verdant enclosures, or, according to Mr. Duncan's present intentions, village green and common; and there is land enough in the neighbourhood for agriculture on a more extended scale. Though the climate is moist, and corn will not ripen, most vegetables grow in abundance. During my stay here, there have been more fine and open than wet days, and at such times the air, at all times salubrious, is most agreeable, and the scenery delightful.

Site of
Metlah-
katlah.

Climate.

The houses are after the European model, and the habits of the people proportionately improved. Though they have not yet forsaken the habit of living more than one family in a house, for the sake of fuel and company, they are beginning more generally to build their houses with small apartments at each end, and a common room in the centre, and thus to recou-

Houses in
Metlah-
katlah.

cile the difficulties of their situation, with a due regard to the decencies of life.

Commer-
cial
arrange-
ments.

Almost every convenience and comfort can be obtained from the shop, which is plentifully stored with goods, a facility which is extensively embraced by the inhabitants, and powerfully conduces to their complete separation from their former modes of life. The law is administered on the spot, though not a single case has occurred during my visit. A soap manufactory, saw mill, blacksmiths' and shoemakers' shops, are being, or are about to be, constructed, the machinery and appliances being on the spot. I have attended a wedding and other feasts. The room was decorated, and the table spread with good but simple viands. Speeches were made, and arrangements usual at home were followed with great propriety. It is a picturesque scene

Sunday
scene in
the Christ-
ian village

to see on a Sunday the whole village turning out in their best attire, and converging in two lines to the common centre, the church. It was like a dream to remember what many of them were once. Here was the former head of the Tsimshean tribes, who, years ago, armed and attired in medicine robes, followed by a band of savages, burst into the schoolroom at Fort Simpson, prepared, if the school were not closed during the season of their mysteries, to take the Missionary's head; only a remarkable interposition of the hand of God saved the life of His helpless but unyielding servant. Another was a chief who, two years ago, declared that he could not be converted, and would return with his people to the customs of his fathers, but now he was baptized and confessed himself a happy believer in Jesus. Others, were men who (to use the expressive language of their baptismal confessions) had been "vile," "worms, and not men," now clothed and in their right mind.

Moral
transforma-
tions.

Every house has a garden in front, besides more extensive plots farther off.

The ac-
commoda-
tion at the
Metlah-
katlah
Mission
house.

The Mission House is an excellent frame building, sixty four feet by thirty two, the largest, I believe, with the exception of one at Fort Rupert, north of Victoria; extremely well built, and lined with dressed cedar; containing eight rooms on the ground-floor, besides out-buildings; a spacious dormitory upstairs for the boarders, looking pleasantly on the islet gardens. The rooms on the ground floor are lofty and commodious. That in which I am writing, and which forms one of the suite of

apartments prepared for the exclusive use of the married Missionary, is, I may say, as comfortable as any room in my own residence. Indeed I was quite astonished at the accommodation provided in so remote a part, where one would have expected a habitation of a much humbler description; and if to this we add a plentiful supply of game, fish, &c., in the season; imported goods in the store; quite a large flock of goats, yielding a profusion of excellent milk; poultry and eggs; a garden with a plentiful stock of vegetables, it is evident that, with any reasonable degree of forethought on the part of the Missionary, the days when anything like ideas of hardship or privation could with propriety be entertained of Metlahkatlah, have entirely passed away. Indeed I have been quite impressed with the feeling that Mr. Duncan, in these prospective arrangements, has been more studious of the comforts of his colleagues than of his own. The other buildings on the Mission premises are the large octagon Church, workshop, store, the original log house in which Mr. Duncan lived for three years, and other out-houses; the former being a building of extraordinary merit, considering the time and circumstances of its erection, being built in the frost and snow and rain, and all its parts marked out and fitted with Mr. Duncan's own hands.

Abundance of provisions

Other Mission buildings.

There is now also approaching completion another large building. The smaller portion will be used as a court-house, the larger for village assemblies, but more especially as a trading mart and a place of accommodation for strangers coming for trade and other purposes. This latter, it is expected, will be its most important use; it will obviate the dispersion of the visitors over the village; they will be comfortably housed together in this building, and thus afford an excellent opportunity of preaching the Gospel to themselves, and, through them, to the surrounding tribes. This building, ninety feet by thirty, is erected on the shore at the upper end of a large jetty.

Court-house and public room in progress.

This leads me to make a few remarks on the trade. No step of a temporal nature was, perhaps, so loudly demanded, or has conferred such important benefits on the people of Metlahkatlah, in conducing to their comfort and contentment in their new home. Instead of having to go seventeen miles for supplies to a heathen camp, they can procure them at their own doors at a cheaper rate. Persons who come hither to trade, carry away

Beneficial effect of legitimate trade.

Commerce a necessity which has conduced to the spiritual welfare of the trader.

some word or impression to affect their countrymen at home. During my own sojourn at Metlahkatlah there has not been a single Sabbath in which there have not been hearers of this description attendant on the word of life. This is one of those branches of the work taken up by Mr. Duncan, simply because it was pressed upon him by the force of circumstances as necessary to his entire success. The time has passed away when he felt himself humiliated at being offered the sale of a fur.

Purposes to which trade profits have been applied.

A striking benefit of the trade is the disposition of the profits; for, with a view to transferring it, when possible, to other parties, he has always conducted it on business principles, in order that the parties so assuming it might be able to live by it. Hitherto the profits realised on this principle, absorbed by no personal benefits, have been expended on objects conducive to the public benefit, in the erection of public buildings, in subsidies to the people, in aid of improving their roads and wharves for canoes, in charity to the poor, and even in the redemption of slaves. The sum of £600 has been already expended on such objects, and £400 are in hand ready to be applied to similar uses. In fact, the only person who suffers is Mr. Duncan himself, who has sacrificed his comfort, his repose, and almost his health, for the sole benefit of the people, but has been more than compensated by the rich reward of feeling that God has owned and blessed the sacrifice.

Good effect of trade on natives.

Besides this, the trade affords industrial occupation to the people, and thus aids them in a more steady advancement in the comforts of civilized life. It is quite a lively scene to witness the various parties of labourers engaged, some in bringing the rough timber in rafts from the forest, others in sawing it into planks, others planing, others cutting the shingles, others with nail and hammer erecting the building, all devoting themselves to their daily task, rather with the constancy of the English labourer, than with the fitful disposition of the savage.

Domestic arrangements.

The interior of the Mission House presents an aspect of neatness, order, and activity. There are fourteen boarders, and the various departments of household work are allotted to them according to a well-digested programme, which they carry out, not as menials, but as pupils of industry in training for their future position as wives and mothers. I have more than once

visited the dormitory unexpectedly, and found everything in order, and nothing in the air or aspect of the room to offend the most fastidious. Each girl has her own recess, and many of them are prettily ornamented. I have seen scarcely any jars among the boarders, and few cases deserving serious reproof or punishment. They are cheerful and contented, and it is curious to mark, when the time comes for the settlement in life of a Mission boarder, the struggle which takes place between the natural desire to enter into the married state, and regret at leaving a spot which has been a happy home. On the other hand, such is the estimation in which this establishment is held by the Christians of the place, that a young man will scarcely look at a girl for a wife unless she has passed through it—the best pledge in their eyes of usefulness and virtue. It is certainly surprising how Mr. Duncan, without female assistance, other than that of natives, could have so successfully carried on this branch of the work. He possesses the sure talent of blending kindness with authority. The girls ever brighten at his approach; they view him with thorough respect, and their obedience is prompt and hearty.

Preparation of the girls in the Boarding School for domestic life.

During the fishing season the general school work is much contracted; and during the period of my own visit this season, and the presence of the whole Missionary body, the important matters which have engaged attention, not to say the examination of upwards of 100 candidates for baptism, which alone has occupied many whole days and portions of days, and in which I could not, for obvious reasons, proceed a single step without Mr. Duncan's presence; all these causes have combined to interrupt, not only the work of education, but other works as well, requiring constant supervision. Still the general school has occasionally assembled, and now that we are all leaving it is in full work again. The conclusions resulting from my inspection are in the highest degree favourable; in fact the regular technical school has evidently formed a main feature in Mr. Duncan's system, and a chief fulcrum of his success. The progress of the scholars is remarkable. They read, write, cipher, and can translate easy books into their own language and *vice versa*. They have made some progress in geography and history. And I certainly think that Mr. Duncan, in view of the special relations of this people, has done well in preferring

Favourable results of School inspection.

The ordinary Roman alphabet preferred to the syllabic system.

the ordinary English to the syllabic system, as the vehicle of expressing their thoughts in writing. I have received while at Metlahkatlah quite a number of notes written in connexion with some casual incident or feeling. I am the bearer of about a dozen letters to various friends and well-wishers at Victoria. I enclose two themes, written by girls in the Mission under thirteen years of age, on a scriptural subject which I gave them, and in the preparation of which they were entirely unaided, nor has a single correction been made, except of a pure inadvertancy either in grammar or spelling. One of these girls (Omintal) is the daughter of a French Canadian half-breed, brought up entirely by her Indian mother from the age of seven years; the other is a pure native. It is evident that such correspondence with Christian friends would be impracticable under the syllabic system, and under that system the learners at Metlahkatlah would be debarred from a great stimulus and a real pleasure.

English a foreign tongue.

One remark, however, must be made in reference to the education of the boarders, and it is the place which the English and their native tongues respectively occupy. The former is a foreign language to them, and, with a shame peculiarly Indian, they can rarely be brought to *speak* in it. It is the one difficulty which, with all his influence, Mr. Duncan has not yet been able to conquer. Nothing, either in the way of reward or displeasure, has induced them to attempt anything like conversation in English, either with one another or with himself. All the instruction is carried on in Tsimshian, just as in teaching a child Latin you use English. All the nurture and admonition applied to their daily training are carried on through the same medium; so is the conduct of the general affairs of the establishment. The letters and themes which they write are precisely those which an English scholar produces who is learning French. It will be obvious from this, and I think the remark extremely important, *that no one can take the sole charge of that establishment without the knowledge of the native tongue.* In one week it would be a scene of disorder. A Frenchman in sole charge of an English school is a faint image of it. These girls are not angels, but creatures just emerged from heathenism, learning and trying to be good: some of them only a very short time there, ripe for every temptation, competent for any riot. More than once while I was there Mr. Duncan's ever-watchful eye

All instruction given in Tsimshian

and open ear nipped in the bud incipient schemes, from without as well as from within, from which otherwise mischief would have spread like wildfire through the institution. Without the language, in which Mr. Duncan thinks and dreams as well as speaks, this could not have been done. To try to move the feelings of an English child in French or German! But with their native tongue, tintured with the accents of Christian love, the Missionary goes straight to their hearts. One day Mr. Duncan brought before me (whom he generally addressed in all such cases) two girls for a fault. One, being innocent, was released; for the other I interceded, and not in vain. He spoke to her for some time without apparent effect. At last he reminded her that she was an orphan, without a friend in the world except within those walls. The poor girl could not withstand this appeal: I saw her frame shake with emotion, and she sobbed with all the sensibility of an English girl. Tyranny might do something with its iron rod; but the authority of love can only be effectual through a medium which the heart can understand.

I must now say a few words as to Mr. Duncan himself. The great cause of his success appears to me to lie, before all other things, in this, that he has made a sacrifice of himself to the work; yielding himself an obedient instrument to the will of God, so that no consideration of comfort, taste, interest, reputation, or safety (in all which respects he has been severely tried) has weighed with him to decline or abandon any undertaking which he saw needful to his success. Thus, when warned by the white people at Fort Simpson that his stand against the medicine work would end in blood, he said, in no vaunting spirit, "Then let mine be the blood that is shed. I am here for the subversion of heathenism, and I will die rather than give place to it for one hour." Thus also, in the establishment of the Mission boarding-school for girls, notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion of the Bishop, the Governor, and myself (not of the work itself, but of the time and manner of its commencement), he went on. He knew that if he would preserve those girls from destruction, and his work from serious injury, he must take it in hand; and the Bishop was so impressed with its importance that, in his deeply interesting account of his visit last year, he remarked, "This has been the successful experiment of Metlahkatlah."

Mr. Duncan's knowledge of the language.

Power of the Vernacular tongue.

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Resolu-
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Duncan.

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Testimony
of the
Bishop.

Manifold duties of the Missionary.

The same spirit is evinced in every-day affairs. The Mission House is frequented from morning to night by persons requiring the advice, assistance, or direction of the Missionary, and he is, in turns, minister, schoolmaster, physician, builder, arbitrator, magistrate, trader. And Mr. Duncan now seems ready to resign his long-cherished hope of being relieved, by consenting to continue among a people to whom his presence seems almost a necessity. It must be admitted that, in addition to this prime qualification of entire devotedness, he possesses many others which have powerfully conduced to his success; but all would have been insufficient without this to bring the Mission to its present state.

Necessity of power of adaptation.

I should not have ventured to write in a strain which may appear almost eulogistic, were it not for the opportunity which it affords me of making a remark which has been very deeply impressed upon my mind during this visit, and it is this—that one essential to the Missionary's full success is, to be ready to adapt himself, without reserve, to the necessities of his position. Whatever is needful to the contentment and elevation of the little Christian flock, which there is no other means of supplying, he must, as far as possible, do it himself; and if he does not possess in his character some reasonable degree of adaptation to such exigencies, he can scarcely be regarded as fully qualified for his position. I regard the Christian village of Metlahkatlah as affording a remarkable illustration of this fact.

Full sense in which the Gospel may be said to be the cause of the existence of the Christian village

It is easy to say that the Gospel has been the effectual instrument of its establishment. This is true in the fullest extent, but not in the limited sense in which some regard the work of the Gospel; supposing it to consist merely in preaching, and leaving the people to accomplish by themselves their temporal elevation. Had this course been pursued in the present instance, the Christian village of Metlahkatlah could not have been founded, or, if founded, kept together. In a civilized community, where every branch of industry and every kind of profession are carried on as means of livelihood, the case is different; but if in this case the Missionary could not have become, in a sense, all in all to the people, souls would have been saved indeed, but it would have been as individuals rescued from a wreck: there would have been no church, no Christian people. And surely the building of a house, or the giving to a needy member of the

flock a coat or a bag of flour in exchange for a skin, is as much a work of *piety*, and the genuine fruit of the Gospel, as the sailmaking of St. Paul, or the coats and garments which Dorcas made. And the blessing of God seems specially to rest on those who, after the example of the Saviour, are willing to deny themselves that His members may be comforted both in body and soul.

While at Metlahkatlah I had the pleasure of visiting the new Christian village of the Naas Mission, where the pleasing results of the faithful, devoted labours of Mr. Doolan are seen in the collection together of about fifty souls, who have come out from their heathen homes and declared themselves on the Lord's side. Though it was the fishing season, a goodly number were collected in the evening, to whom, through the assistance of Mr. Doolan as interpreter, I was able to address a few words of Christian counsel and encouragement. It was delightful to unite in prayer and praise with such a little flock in this far-distant spot, the extreme north of the British possessions on this coast, and to hear them sing, with melody and devotion, hymns to the Saviour of mankind. The Mission House is completed, and vigorous preparations for a school and other buildings are being made. Mr. Doolan will be very greatly missed in the Mission. His pious, humble spirit has endeared him to all who know him; and we cannot help cherishing the hope that the providence of God may one day lead him back to this coast, and turn to the further advancement of His kingdom the attainments of language and experience which he has acquired. With excellent spirit Mr. Tomlinson has submitted to the necessity of taking the sole charge, given up his cherished hope of opening a new Mission, and is prepared to carry on the work with that spirit of devotedness which is the most happy augury of success. Besides the spirit of piety, which is the first essential requisite in the work of God, he appears to possess that thoroughly practical turn which is so necessary to the Missionary on this coast. Although he came to the Mission with feelings opposed to the trade, he has become an entire convert to its necessity; and he left us a few days ago, followed by our good wishes and prayers, in command of the little sloop *Endeavour*, freighted with goods for the establishment of a branch tradestore in the Naas Mission, to be carried on by a native Christian.

Another
Christian
village.

Rev. R.
Tomlinson
takes
charge of
Kincan-
leth, Naas
River.

Importance of assistance at Metlahkatlah.

In conclusion, I hope you will permit me to lay before you one or two matters which I feel to be of considerable importance. And first, the necessity of an assistant to Mr. Duncan in the general work at Metlahkatlah, the amount of which is overwhelming, and as no one part can be safely dispensed with, the care and toil to keep it all in order are telling on your Missionary, and can scarcely fail, at no very distant period, to break him down. A man with a soul of tried character and consistency, of the station perhaps of a Scripture Reader or City Missionary, without ulterior views as to ordination, which not unfrequently appear to be followed by ulterior views as to sphere, of education sufficient, with some training, to work in the school, willing to turn his hand to anything, above all a man of God, would seem to be the kind of man required. Perhaps better unmarried, for when settled in his work he might, we think, without difficulty find a wife in the country.

Possibility of extending the Mission in the North Pacific.

I have been impressed with a strong desire to see your Mission extended on this coast. I believe God has given you an open door, an entrance to a large field. One or two new stations might evangelise the nearly ten thousand Tsimshean speaking people. A member of one of the distant tribes who came the other day to trade, said to Mr. Duncan, "You have opened our eyes by what you have done at Metlahkatlah. We want to follow the same way. All the people round know that your heart is good towards them." There is also frequent communication between this people and the Hydahs on Queen Charlotte's Island, a fine race of men, and I believe many of them not a little impressed with the Metlahkatlah experiment. They would, it is confidently expected, welcome the messengers of life. May it be yours to send them!

Desire of natives to welcome Missionaries.

Visit undertaken at request of the Bishop.

At the wish, and by the kind arrangement of the Bishop, I have undertaken this, to me most grateful, expedition, at whose suggestion also I write to you, trusting that a connected account from one who has observed Mr. Duncan's course from his first arrival in this country may not be unacceptable.

I pray that the Lord may be pleased to multiply His blessings on the labours of the Church Missionary Society in all parts of the world for the extension of His kingdom.