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THE DAKOTA MISSION.

BY REV. S. R. RIGGS.

In the chronicles of Fort Snelling, published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1865, mention is made of a visit to that post on the 1st of September, 1829, by the Rev. ALVIN COE, accompanied by Mr. J. D. STEVENS. They came on an exploring tour, with the view of establishing Protestant missions among the Chippewas and Dakotas.

But the Dakota mission was not commenced until several years afterwards.

In this same Fort Snelling chronicle it is recorded that, "in the year 1834, SAMUEL W. and GIDEON H. POND arrived, and offered their services for the benefit of the Sioux, and were sent out to the Agent's agricultural colony at Lake Calhoun." These brothers POND were young men from Washington, Conn., and are still honored residents of Minnesota. They built a log cabin near the Indian village, on a high bluff on the lake shore.

During this summer of 1834, THOS. S. WILLIAMSON, of Ripley, Ohio, received from the Am. Board a commission "to proceed on an exploring tour among the Indians of the Upper Mississippi."

In the spring following, Doctor WILLIAMSON, with Mrs. WILLIAMSON and one child, left Ripley to remove to the land of the Dakotas. He was accompanied by Mr. ALEX. G. HUGGINS, as missionary farmer, with his wife and two children. Miss SARAH POAGE, a sister of Mrs. WILLIAMSON, who afterwards became the first Mrs. G. H. POND, made one of the party, as teacher. They reached Fort Snelling on the 16th of May, 1835.

On the 30th of the same month, JEDEDIAH D. STEVENS, now a minister of the gospel, who was here with Mr. Coe, nearly six years before, arrived with his family. A niece of Mr. STEVENS, Miss LUCY CORNELIA STEVENS, accompanied them as teacher. She was afterwards married to Mr. GAVIN, one of the Swiss missionaries.

On the second Sabbath of June, a Presbyterian church was organized in one of the company rooms of the fort, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered. Of this church, Captain, now Colonel GUSTAVUS LOOMIS, and (now) Gen. H. H. SIBLEY, were elected ruling elders.

Mr. STEVENS commenced a mission station at Lake Harriet; and on the 23d of June, Dr. WILLIAMSON and his party left the fort for Lac qui Parle, in company with JOSEPH RENVILLE, the trader at that place.

The first years of the mission at both stations were spent in erecting buildings, in acquiring the language, and in teaching such as were at first found willing to learn.

At Lake Harriet, Mr. STEVENS commenced and carried on for several years a small boarding school, which resulted in educating and preparing for greater usefulness several halfbreed girls.

At Lac qui Parle some were taught in the English language, but more learned to read in the Dakota. Some progress was made in collecting words for a vocabulary and in obtaining translations of portions of Scripture. These were obtained by Dr. WILLIAMSON through Mr. RENVILLE. The process was by reading the French and then writing down the Dakota as given by Mr. R.

In the spring of 1836, Mr. GIDEON H. POND went to Lac qui Parle to assist in manual labor and teaching. In the autumn of that year, Mr. S. W. POND returned to his native place in Connecticut, where he was licensed and ordained as an evangelist to preach to the Indians. In the following spring he returned and again took up his abode chiefly with the Lake Calhoun Indians, residing at the Lake Harriet Station.

On the first day of June, 1837, S. R. RIGGS and his wife MARY A. L. RIGGS, reached Fort Snelling, and were kindly received by Lieut. Ogden and his wife, who was the daughter of then Maj. LOOMIS. For the next three months they were domiciled in an upper room of the school house at the Lake Harriet Station.

"The situation of the mission houses is very beautiful, on a little eminence just upon the shore of a lovely lake skirted with trees. Beyond, towards the fort, commences a finely undulating prairie which reaches to the rivers. About a mile north of us is Lake Calhoun, on the margin of which is an Indian village of about twenty *teepees*. Most of these are bark houses twenty feet square, and others are tents of skins."

The following extract from a letter written at the time will show something of first impressions :

"The most singular ornament I have seen was a large striped snake fastened among the painted hair, feathers and ribbons of an Indian's head dress, in such a manner that it could coil around in front, and dart out its snaky head or creep down the back at pleasure. The Indian sat perfectly at ease, apparently enjoying the astonishment and fear manifested by some of the family."

An interesting fact is related of Mrs. PERSIS DENTAN as having occurred early in this spring of 1837. Mrs. DENTAN was formerly Miss SKINNER, of the Mackinaw mission, but married Mr. DENTAN, one of the Swiss missionaries, who came to preach the gospel to the Dakotas.

Mr. DENTAN was taken sick at Fort Snelling. Mrs. D. heard of it, and as soon as the ice was out of the Mississippi, she procured a canoe, and with two Indian women to paddle, came up a hundred miles, sleeping on the snow-covered ground two nights.

About the first of September, Doctor WILLIAMSON and Mr. POND came down from Lac qui Parle; and Mr. and Mrs. RIGGS returned with them, reaching the mission band at the "Lake that Speaks," on the thirteenth.

On Thursday, the 2d day of November, Mr. G. H. POND and Miss SARAH POAGE were married. Mr. POND on this occasion followed the injunction of the Saviour: "When thou makest a feast call not thy friends and thy rich neighbors, but call the poor and the lame and the blind." It was a novel wedding

supper, and with glad hearts they dished out and ate the potatoes and turnips and pork.

A native mission church had been organized nearly two years before by Dr. WILLIAMSON, and at this time numbered about fifteen, with A. G. HUGGINS, G. H. POND, and Mr. RENVILLE, as ruling elders. For many years the majority of the native church members were women. Some time after, this fact was brought up by the Indian men as an objection, that our church was an assembly of women. We ought to have waited and taken the men in first.

Late in October of 1838, Dr. WILLIAMSON and his wife started for Ohio. He had obtained the Gospel of Mark in the Dakota language, together with fugitive chapters from other parts of the Bible. Also he took with him the manuscript for a school book. Although not exactly the first printing done in the language, these were the first books that did much service in the mission. Heretofore teaching had been done chiefly by means of lessons printed by hand.

At Lake Harriet mission station, on the 22d of November, 1838, SAMUEL WILLIAM POND was married to Miss CORDELIA EGGLESTON, who was a sister of Mrs. J. D. STEVENS. And in the spring of 1839, Miss LUCY CORNELIA STEVENS was married to Rev. DANIEL GAVIN. For a while Mr. and Mrs. GAVIN resided at Red Wing and then removed to East Canada, where they labored for the French population.

Early in the spring of 1839, Mr. G. H. POND removed with his family from Lac qui Parle, making a cance voyage down the Minnesota, and established himself in connection with his brother at Lake Harriet, to labor again with the Lake Calhoun band. About this time Mr. STEVENS left the service of the board and removed to Wabashaw, and then to Prairie du Chien.

The winter of 1838 and '39 was remarkable for a religious excitement. More than usual interest was felt and manifested —the meetings were larger than before—and ten women were added to the church at Lac qui Parle. The next summer was somewhat noted for an unsuccessful war party which made a path to the Chippewa country; and coming home without scalps, they laid the blame to the prayers of the mission, and took vengeance on our cattle.

Protestant missions carry with them the plough and the loom. From the beginning it had been a part of our work to make more than two stalks of corn grow where one grew before. And the Indians themselves being witnesses, we had helped them to raise a much more plentiful supply of corn and afterwards of potatoes.

Mrs. HUGGINS was mistress of the spinning wheel, and introduced the Dakota women and girls into the mysteries of twisting flax and wool. In the autumn of 1838 they commenced to knit socks and stockings. But not until a year later, or towards the close of 1839, did they try their skill in weaving. On a loom made and put into operation by Mr. HUGGINS, two Dakota women and two girls wove for themselves each enough of *linsey* for a *short gown*—in all ten or twelve yards. *This* was doubtless the first cloth made in Minnesota. For several years education in domestic manufactures was continued, more for the purpose of showing the Indians how such things were done, than with the expectation of getting the wheel and the loom domiciled among them.

During the first years of the mission at Lac qui Parle, "the church" was literally "in the house." Dr. WILLIAMSON had built a story and a half log house, one end of the lower part of which was devoted to school and Sabbath meetings. When the congregations increased, the partition between this and Doctor W.'s living rooms, was made into doors, and so a larger assembly was accommodated.

In the summer of 1841, a church was built of unburnt bricks, which stood for thirteen years, until the station was removed to Hazlewood. This building was surmounted by a bell, which was the first bell so used in Minnesota.

About this time we received our first male members from the full-blood Dakotas. By this our people there were subjected to a species of persecution which is difficult to bear. When SIMON ANA-WANYMANE, after professing Christianity, put on the white man's dress and went to work, he had in the estimation and language of the Indians, "made himself a woman."

Owing to the war with the Chippewas and the exposed position of the Indians at Lake Calhoun, they abandoned this

place and removed over to the Minnesota. But for some time they were unsettled. The Mr. PONDS accordingly left Lake Harriet in the spring of 1840, and for a while lived in the stone house near Fort Snelling, known as the "Baker House." It was not until 1843 that they were able to build at Oak Grove and again reside among the same Indians. With these lower Indians there were always many opposing forces, and GoD's truth made but little progress.

In the summer of 1842, Mr. and Mrs. RIGGS "visited the States," as we called it then. What we regarded then as a very good translation of the Gospel of John had been procured through MR. RENVILLE. Mr. G. H. POND had translated Luke, and Mr. RIGGS had translated The Acts and Paul's Epistles with the Revelation of John. Added to this we had a portion of the Psalms and Dr. WILLIAMSON'S translation of Genesis. Besides, our hymns in the Dakota Language had now accumulated so as to be quite a work to write off. Then we needed some school books. All of these being prepared for the press, the object of this visit on East was to have the books printed. The printing was done partly in Boston and partly in Cincinnati.

In this year Mr. S. W. POND removed up to Lac qui Parle and Dr. WILLIAMSON came down to the stone house, which places they continued to occupy until the year following, when they both returned.

About this time the contest on the *polygamy question* was at its height. It was quite a common thing for the principal Dakota men to have more than one wife. In several instances two wives of one man had been received to the church at Lac qui Parle. It was not perceived that we could adopt any rule excluding either of them. And when the man came he pleaded that he had done this in a state of ignorance—that to put one away would subject the woman to difficulties and expose her to temptations, and that he wished to keep the mother for the sake of the children. He pleaded also the example of Solomon and David and Jacob and Abraham. The question had its difficulties. The missionaries did not exactly harmonize in their views. But finally it was worked out, and no man having

more than one woman was recognized as a member of the mission church.

The spring of 1843 was marked by an addition to the working force of the mission. Several years before, Miss FANNY HUGGINS had joined the family of her brother at Lac qui Parle, and had actively engaged in teaching. Now Miss JANE S. WILLIAMSON joined her brother's family, for the same purpose. Mr. ROBERT HOPKINS also and his then youthful wife joined the mission, and were associated with Mr. RIGGS and family in the formation of a new station at Traverse des Sioux.

Here was experienced our first great sorrow. THOMAS L. LONGLEY, a brother of Mrs. RIGGS, who had come out, in the strength of his opening manhood, to assist in erecting buildings at the new station, was drowned in the Minnesota River on the 15th day of July. And by a strange coincidence, in July eight years afterwards, Mr. HOPKINS was to be drowned not far from the same place.

About this time and for eight years afterwards the influence of St. Paul town become great over the Dakota Indians; but it was in the way of furnishing them with *fire water*. And the new station at Traverse des Sioux felt the effects of this more than other villages, being on the great route westward.

Also in these years, as they passed, the opposition to schools seemed to increase. The provision for education which had been inserted in the treaty of 1837–8, proved only an obstacle in the way of education; as unprincipled white men could persuade the Indians that if they sent their children to school, the missionaries would get their money. It was evident that there were men among them who desired, for some reason, to keep the Indians in ignorance. The wakan men among the Indians also were afraid for the supremacy of their stone gods. They were willing to entertain the Great Spirit or the white man's Gob, and give him a place among the gods; but he must not assume the first place even On the other hand Christianity could make no compromise. It required the whole heart and the whole life for JESUS.

So the mission worked on; sometimes in gladness and sometimes in sadness. There were times at Lac qui Parle when the soldiers (Dakotas) stopped the children from coming to school

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and the women from coming to church. But at every such time some one was raised up to withstand the power of heathenism. Sometimes a portion of the Indians would determine on sending away the missionaries; but another party was sure to rise, in a few days, to withstand them. Thus JEHOVAH brought to nought the counsels of the heathen.

In the mean time His word was taking root. Some were learning to read and write. The number of native church members was increased slowly; and there were many who were feeling their way up to a higher civilization.

In the autumn of 1846 the mission held its annual meeting at Traverse des Sioux. This was one of the most important gatherings of the mission. A few months before LITTLE CROW had made application to Dr. WILLIAMSON, through the agent, to come and live at his village of Kaposia a few miles below St. Paul. After several days' discussion of that and kindred subjects connected with the mission, it was decided that Dr. WILLIAMSON accept the invitation and remove down immediately. This change made it necessary to send Mr. RIGGS and family back to Lac qui Parle. Mr. HUGGINS was to come down to the Traverse and Mr. JONAS PETTIJOHN, who had joined the mission that year and married Miss FANNY HUGGINS, was to remain at Lac qui Parle as missionary farmer.

Previous to this time Mr. JOSEPH RENVILLE¹ had died. He had been of great service to the mission in many ways. Could it prosper without him?

In the spring following, that is the spring of 1847, at a meeting of the Dakota Presbytery held at Oak Grove, our preaching force was increased by the licensure of G. H. POND and ROBERT HOPKINS. They both talked the Dakota language and understood Dakota customs. Mr. POND had now been among them thirteen years.

In the summer of 1848 our force was further increased by the arrival of Rev. Moses N. ADAMS and JOHN F. AITON with their wives. JOSEPH W. HANCOCK also came to the Red Wing station, and was afterwards licensed by the Dakota Presbytery. Rev. JOSHUA POTTER also was transferred to this field from the

^{1.} A biographical sketch of Mr. RENVILLE is given in the Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society for 1856, page 104.-W.

Choctaws. Mr. POND and Mr. HOPKINS were ordained. Mr. S. W. POND had before this commenced a station at LITTLE SIX's village at Shakopee. We were now occupying six stations, and strong in men. Mr. ADAMS went to Lac qui Parle to learn the language, and Mr. AITON was placed at Red Wing, while Mr. POTTER spent a year at Traverse des Sioux.

Still although strong in laborers and occupying so many stations, the progress was slow, and the opposition great. There was no point where the gospel took root as it did at Lac qui Parle. There were a few church members at each of the stations, and occasionally a man who was not ashamed to be, partly at least, identified with the new religion; but heathenism was everywhere the ruling element; and nowhere, except at Lac qui Parle, was there any considerable front of opposition against it. Many of the Dakotas desired to have a missionary resident at their village, because it brought them temporal advantages in various ways, but they sought not as yet the higher blessings which the gospel brings.

By and by came the year 1851. This was memorable for various things—chiefly for the treaties that were made that year with the Dakotas and the results that followed. While they were gathering at Traverse des Sioux to make the first treaty of the summer, Mr. HOPKINS was drowned. He went out to bathe on the morning of the 4th of July, and returned not again.

Before this time Mr. POTTER had left the Dakotas and gone to the New York Indians.

The treaties of this year resulted in the removal of all the lower villages of Dakotas up the Minnesota River. Both the Mr. Ponds remained where they were, and preached to the white people who came in. So also did Mr. HANCOCK. Mr. ADAMS removed from Lac qui Parle to Traverse des Sioux in 1853, and organized a church there among the white people. Mr. HUG-GINS and Mr. PETTIJOHN also withdrew from the service of the board. While Dr. WILLIAMSON and his family removed up to the Yellow Medicine and commenced there a new station.

In the fall of 1851, Mr. RIGGS visited New York city to superintend the printing of the Dakota Grammar and Diction-

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ary, which was done by Smithsonian Institute, "under the patronage of the Historical Society of Minnesota."

In the spring of 1854, the mission buildings at Lac qui Parle were burned to the ground. Thereupon the station was removed to Hazlewood, in the neighborhood of the Yellow Medicine. The preaching force was now reduced to Doctor WILLIAMSON and Mr. RIGGS. But the changed circumstances of the Indians and the gathering of the civilized element together, now conspired to growth and development. The seeds which had been sown in previous years now commenced to germinate and to show themselves in a new life. The number of men who had changed their dress and adopted the white man's had so increased, that by forming a coalition with certain half-breeds they formed an independent band and elected their own president, who was recognized as a chief by the agent.

The churches of Hazlewood and Pajutaze both grew in numbers and in character. At the new station at Hazlewood a neat church building was erected in the year 1855, costing about \$700—more than two-thirds of which was raised by the Indians and their friends in the county. Many of these men, who constituted the Hazlewood Republic, built for themselves, with some assistance, comfortable frame and log houses.

The Government came in now and encouraged agriculture and the change of dress in the men. It required a good deal of courage, and some outside pressure also to get a man up to the point of parting with his hair and putting on pantaloons. But steadily the work went on, not without opposition it is true. Even LITTLE CROW often talked of becoming a white man, but there were always reasons which prevented.

The Christian element among the Dakotas was chiefly gathered into the churches of Pajutaze and Hazlewood. A few were at the Lower Sioux Agency, and a few at the villages higher up on the Minnesota.

In the summer of 1859, JOHN P. WILLIAMSON, then a student of Lane Seminary, Ohio, was licensed to preach the gospel by the Dakota Presbytery. And in the autumn of the next year he returned to Dakota land and commenced a station at the Lower Agency. A small church was organized there during the two years that followed, and a neat church building erected. So the work progressed until the time of the outbreak in 1862. We then had three church organizations, containing an aggregate of about sixty-five native members, more than a third of whom were males. We had also commodious houses of worship, which were generally well filled on the Sabbath. We had been educating them in benevolent effort, and for several years their contributions to foreign missions would compare favorably with those of churches in Christian lands.

We had also at this time a boarding school, at the Hazlewood Station, in which and in the other mission families were from eighteen to twenty scholars. Many of these had already learned to read and write and talk English. Mr. H. D. CUNNINGHAM was the steward of the boarding school.

This was the state of the mission when in an unexpected hour the outbreak of August, 1862, burst upon us. There had been murmurings and surgings—there had been difficulties which were hardly quite overcome. And perhaps we ought to have foreseen the storm. But we did not. Providentially Mr. JOHN P. WILLIAMSON had ten days before started on to Ohio. Being stationed at the Lower Agency, where the killing commenced, he might have been in more danger than we were up at the Yellow Medicine. But we all escaped safely—protected by the shield of God. Mr. Amos W. HUGGINS, a son of the associate of Dr. WILLIAMSON at Lac qui Parle, was killed by the Indians at that same Lac qui Parle. He was employed as a government teacher. A good man, who had a heart and a hand to labor for the Dakotas, he has gone to his reward.

The weeks that followed the 18th of August, 1862, were dark weeks. The Dakota mission was broken up—the missionaries had been obliged to flee, and they had escaped only with the skin of their teeth—the mission houses and churches all plundered and burned to the ground—and the native church members scattered, perhaps worse than that—drawn or forced into the rebellion. White men said the Dakota mission was a failure that if our teachings had been right, they would have prevented such an outbreak. We were dumb, because thou, LORD, didst it !

But the vindication was coming. Even now JOHN OTHER DAY, a member of Dr. WILLIAMSON'S church had helped away sixty-two persons from the Agency at the Yellow Medicine.

Our missionary party of forty-three were indebted for our escape to our Christian Indians, to an extent that we did not know of then. And while the troops under Gen. SIBLEY were at Fort Ridgely, making preparations to advance, SIMON ANA-WANYMANE came into our lines with a white woman and three children who had been taken captive by the hostile Sioux. SIMON was an elder in the Hazlewood church. A few days after this LORENZO LAWRENCE, a member of the same church, brought down by canoes Mrs. DECAMP and her children and also a half-breed family. And when the battle of Wood Lake had been fought and our troops reached "Camp Release," nearly one hundred captive white women and children were delivered up. The majority of these were in the hands of the Christian Indians-having been procured from the hostile party by purchase or otherwise. It further appeared that the members of our churches had, with but a few exceptions, kept themselves aloof from participation in the uprising. But that was not all. It was moreover satisfactorily established that they had, from the beginning, resisted and withstood the rebellion, and they were the nucleus around which gathered and strengthened the counter revolution, which gave success to our campaign.

So Gon's word and work were vindicated. But HE had mercies along with the judgments, in store for the Dakotas. And these mercies could come to them only by breaking down their pride and casting them down to the ground.

Of the men who came into our hands by the surrender at Camp Release, more than three-fourths were Mdwakantonwans or Lower Sioux, who had generally refused education and the new religion. But now in their distress, they not only acknowledged the superior power of the white man, but their religion had been at fault—the gods had failed them. The education which they had before despised, they now gladly accepted. The prison at Mankato in the winter of 1862–3, was turned into a great school room. Among the prisoners were a few who had learned to read and write their own language. These became the teachers of the more than three hundred men confined there. In a few weeks two-thirds of these men had so far learned to read and write that they were writing letters

to their families and friends at Fort Snelling. And what was done in the prison was done also in the camp. But the educational movement in the camp, among the women and children at Fort Snelling, was not so universal and absorbing as at Mankato. More readers of the word of GoD were made during this one winter, than had been made by the combined efforts of the mission for more than a quarter of a century. We looked on and said, "How easy it is for GoD to work."

Along with this educational movement was another still more remarkable. Dr. WILLIAMSON had commenced visiting and preaching to the convicts immediately after they were brought down to Mankato. A good deal of interest was manifested. Some individuals indicated a determination to change their religion. But it was not until after the executions that any general and deep interest was manifested. The Sabbath after the executions was the first time the prisoners were let out into the prison yard. They were still chained two and two together, except a few who had been for special reasons unchained. There was snow on the ground. But in that prison yard they gathered around Mr. Riggs, and stood a great congregation to praise Jehovah and to pray unto him and hear his word.

The interest increased. Dr. WILLIAMSON continued to visit them. About mid-winter Mr. G. H. POND received an invitation, from Indians with whom he was acquainted years before, to visit them in prison. He went up and spent a week or ten days at Mankato. During this time frequent daily meetings were held in the prison by Dr. WILLIAMSON and Mr. POND. The whole multitude then and there abdicated their old religion and embraced the gospel. They wished to be baptized. And the brethren, after consultation with Mr. HICKS, the Presbyterian minister in Mankato, and subjecting them to such examination and instruction as was possible with such a number, proceeded to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, about two hundred and fifty persons. Some, who preferred the Episcopal service, preferred to be baptized by Mr. HINMAN. A few others were afterwards baptized by us.

During the winter there was a somewhat similar religious movement in the camp at Fort Snelling. JOHN P. WILLIAMSON

was with them constantly and Mr. RIGGS occasionally. Nearly one hundred persons were duly examined and received to the sealing ordinances of the church in the camp. A number also became connected with the Episcopalians.

"So mightily grew the word of GoD and prevailed."

In the spring of 1863, the camp at Fort Snelling were, with the exception of about twenty families, removed to the Missouri River and located at Fort Thompson. The families exempted from removal to the Missouri were taken up to the frontiers the men to be employed as scouts for the military. In this company are PAUL and SIMON and A. RENVILLE and NAPA-SHNE-DOOTE, four of the six elders of our mission churches. JOHN B. RENVILLE, another elder, removed with his family to St. Anthony.

The prisoners at Mankato were transferred to Camp McClellan, at Davenport, Iowa.

Within the nearly two years that have since passed about one hundred more have, at various places, but chiefly at the prison and at Fort Thompson, been received to church fellowship. So that now, deducting for deaths and backsliders, there are about four hundred Dakotas who are connected with our mission church.

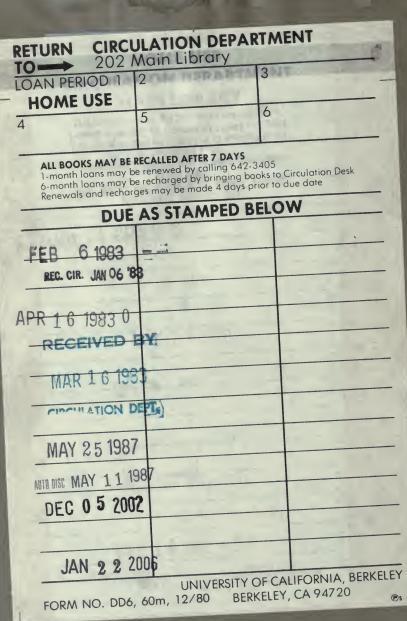
Young Mr. WILLIAMSON has identified himself with the work on the Missouri, and has for his assistants at Fort Thompson, Mr. Edward Pond, son of Mr. G. H. Pond, who married MARY FRANCES HOPKINS, daughter of Mr. R. HOPKINS, who was drowned at Traverse des Sioux.

The wonderful progress in education made since the outbreak has created a large demand for books, which for a time we could poorly meet. But several books have recently been prepared and electrotyped, which will give them a better supply than they have had before.

There are, first, a new School Primer; second, a Dakota Catechism; third, Precept upon Precept, translated by Mr. JOHN RENVILLE; and lastly, The New Testament, with the books of Genesis and Proverbs from the Old.

What the future will be we cannot tell. But we can safely say, thus far the Dakota mission has not been a failure. The LORD has wrought wonderfully for HIS own Name's sake.

St. Anthony, February, 1865.





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