

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

MUSKOKA MISSION FIELD.

REPORT OF REV. A. FINDLAY, SUPERINTENDENT.

WINTER SUPPLY.

I beg leave to report for the past year as follows: That during the past winter supply was given by catechists in the stations at Stanleydale, Stisted, Rosseau and in the Nipissing group. Several days' supply was also given to Huntsville by members of the Presbytery. Missionary meetings were also held in nearly all the stations in the field by deputations appointed by the Presbytery.

WORK OF SUPERINTENDENCE.

I am glad to be able to report that I have visited all the stations in the field during the past few months, for the purpose of organizing and dispensing ordinances, with the exception of Port Carling and Deebank. Commencing this work on the 23rd of June last, I have been steadily occupied at it until the 26th of September.

CONDITION OF THE FIELD.

Taking a view of the whole field in its present condition and future prospects, the outlook is encouraging, although at some points the condition of matters is not what one could desire. The discouragement caused by the stringency of the times and the total loss of crops, in some cases, by the settlers, has wrought injuriously to the cause in many of the stations. Yet we look upon this as but temporary, and trust soon to see matters assuming a more hopeful aspect. We do not mean to say that less interest is being taken in spiritual things by the people of our stations. Our missionaries are heartily received and their labours appreciated as of old, while the people are doing what they can for the support of ordinances among themselves. But there is the lack of means and the absence of many familiar faces in some of the older stations, which bespeaks a change. Owing to the disheartening causes above alluded to, there has been among our people quite an emigration out of the district; some returning to the "front," for a time at least; others, affected by the Manitoba fever, going to the far West to try their fortunes there. From one station, for example, we gave seven certificates of membership to those who were going west, and in another station, in revising the roll of membership, we removed the names of eleven persons who had left the locality. These are extreme cases it is true, but they serve to shew what severe losses the stations have met with in some instances, and what difficulties they have to contend with in order to keep up their former standing. On the whole, however, there has been an advance in the membership in the older stations, and when we add to this the increase from the stations organized this year, our membership is decidedly in advance of previous years.

DECIDED INCREASE.

At the last report, presented two years ago, the membership was stated to be about 500; to-day it is 604, and when it is remembered that this enumeration does not include Washago and Gravenhurst, now under the charge of Rev. A. Dawson, nor Maganetanwan and four associated stations, under the care of Rev. H. Thomson, which were included in the last report, it will be seen that a decided increase has taken place.

ORDINANCES ADMINISTERED.

The ordinance of the Lord's supper has been dispensed as follows, viz.: at Bracebridge, on Nov. 2nd, April 11th and July 4th; at Monck, on Feb. 29th; at South Falls, June 13th; at Stanleydale and Stisted, June 20th; at Huntsville and Allansville, June 27th; at Raymond and McIntosh's, July 11th; at Parry Sound, July 18th; at Rosseau and Turtle Lake, July 25th; at Emsdale and Knox Church, Chaffey, Aug. 8th; at Uffington and York's, July 15th; at Port Sydney and Bethel, Aug. 22nd; at Burke's Falls and Katrine, Aug. 29th; at Strong and Stony Lake, Sept. 5th; at Eagle Lake, Sept. 7th; at Powassan and Nipissingan, Sept. 12th; at Commanda Creek and Mecunoma, Sept. 19th; and at Baysville, Sept. 26th.

NEW STATIONS ORGANIZED.

The following stations have been organized, viz.: Burke's Falls, in the township of Armour, on the 28th of August; Stony Lake, in township of Strong, on the 3rd of September; Strong, in the township of Strong,

on the 4th of September; Eagle Lake, in the township of Machar, on the 6th of September; Powassan, in the township of Himsforth, on the 10th of September; Nipissingan, in the township of Nipissing, on the 11th of September; and Mecunoma, in the township of Lount, on the 18th of September. These stations are all in the field occupied by the Students' Missionary Society of Knox College.

BAPTISM, ORDINATION OF ELDERS, ETC.

The ordinance of baptism has been administered during the year, to sixty-six children and one adult.

After being duly elected, elders were ordained at Bracebridge, on the 13th day of October, 1879; at Huntsville, on the 8th day of August; at Knox Church, Chaffey, on the same day, and at Emsdale, on the 27th day of the same month, in the present year. At all our services the attendance was very good and the interest taken in things spiritual very marked. Our prayer is that the seed which from year to year is being sown in these comparatively newer portions of the vineyard, may be abundantly watered, that it may spring up and bear a rich harvest to the Master's glory. I can speak of the faithful work which is being done by our student missionaries in all the stations, the results of which are seen, not only in the interest taken in the work by the people themselves, but also in the testimony borne on all sides by the people of their self-denying labours.

In all the stations under the care of the Presbytery, I made inquiry as to whether the terms of the circular issued by the Home Mission Committee of Presbytery, in April last, had been complied with. In most cases I found that it had, and where it had not I saw, before parting with them, that it was attended to in so far as the appointing of a managing committee was concerned. I also took occasion to urge upon them all the necessity not only of meeting to the full their obligations, but also of meeting them promptly. As a result I do not anticipate the repetition, to so great an extent, at least, of the difficulties of past years.

One of our great difficulties still is the giving of supply to those outlying stations during the winter months. We have been able to overcome this in a measure only, but we hope, by the appointment of one or two additional ordained missionaries, to overtake this work still further.

WORK OF KNOX COLLEGE STUDENTS' MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

I have been able this season to visit all the stations, within the bounds of this field, under the care of the Students' Missionary Association of Knox College. This association has under its care some fifteen organized stations, and six or seven other stations where service is held more or less regularly, but which are not judged to be ready for organization. The amount of good which this association is accomplishing in this field can hardly be overestimated. Entering upon the work at a time, in the history of the field, when the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee could not do anything for them, nursing the cause when it is weak and bringing the stations forward to a stage of growth when the Home Mission Committee can undertake the care of them, they preserve to our Church many members who would otherwise be lost to us, and secure to the Church whole sections of territory which, under other circumstances, would pass into the care of other sections of the Church. As an illustration of what is being accomplished, I might cite what is known as the Nipissing field. In 1877 their first missionary was sent into this region of country, then a *terra incognita* to the Church at large. This was merely an experiment to search out the land. In 1878 another missionary was sent in for a longer period. In 1879 the field was divided and placed under the care of two missionaries. By next season we hope the Society may see their way clear to divide again and appoint a third missionary, as with the new stations which it is desirable to take up as soon as possible, the field will be too large for the present staff of labourers.

HELP FROM LADIES OF ST. PETER'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ROCHESTER.

A pleasing incident occurred during the season, in the arrival of a missionary, sent by the Ladies' Aid Association of St. Peter's Church, Rochester, N.Y., under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Riggs. These Christian friends having heard of the spiritual wants of this district, sent Mr. Arthur McDonald, a student of Princeton Theological Seminary, to labour for some

weeks in the more destitute localities, they bearing all his expenses. I was able to assign Mr. McDonald a field which was entirely new, in the townships of Sinclair and Franklin. Mr. McDonald reports holding service at four different points in these townships, at which there was a good attendance, averaging about fifty. He also reports visiting nearly one hundred families, and that the people have expressed a strong desire for the continuance of these services in future. Our best thanks are due to these kind friends in Rochester for their Christian sympathy thus expressed, and, if not asking too much, we hope that they will continue to supply this field for a season or two at least, until it becomes more fully developed.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES.

It is also worthy of mention in this connection, that service has been held during the summer by Prof. Campbell, of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, and by Mr. James Campbell, of Toronto, on Yoho and Chief's Islands, respectively, their summer residences in Lake Joseph. These services are attended by many of the settlers and will average an attendance of from thirty to forty.

PROSPECTS.

In reviewing the work of the past and in looking forward to the future our prospects in this district were never more bright than at the present time. Difficulties which few can understand, except those who have had to grapple with them, have beset us in the past. Our missionaries, labouring one hundred miles from railway communication, in a section of country which has been looked upon with but little favour by older and more favoured parts of the country, and among a people who have year after year met with one disappointment after another, to discourage and dishearten, reduced in some instances by the severe summer frosts to almost absolute want, there has been but little to cheer and encourage. But we trust the tide is now turning. The present year has been one of comparative plenty, the country is becoming better known as to its capabilities and resources, the near prospect of railway communication through the centre of the district, and the influx from the older parts of Ontario, of those who can accommodate themselves to the privations of bush life for a few years, all these things point us as a Church in but one direction, viz., our duty to this important section of country. Let the work which, in a sense, is only begun, be vigorously carried on in the future. Let the voices of our missionaries, proclaiming those truths which are dear to many of those who have buried themselves in the forest, be heard, and the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them." Our missionaries are heartily received wherever they go, our services are highly appreciated even by those who hitherto have claimed no connection with us as a Church, while we have in our colleges men who are willing to undertake this pioneer work during the summer season at least. Our students' missionary associations are peculiarly adapted by their constitution for beginning this work, and while our larger scheme of Home Missions is heartily supported, as it ought to be, let these associations not be forgotten by those who have the interest and welfare of the Church at heart. These associations carry on the work in fields in which not only our own Church, but other Churches also, who are not behind us in zeal, find it impossible to keep up the work. But these associations, however great their zeal, can only go so far as their means will allow. We have already received from the Association of Knox College several stations in this district, which have been originated and brought forward to a certain stage by their fostering care, and we expect, in a year or two, to receive from them a further gift of eight or ten stations more, fully prepared to bear their share in the matter of self support. Their work in this district is not yet completed; with the new townships which are being opened up, new stations must be formed; and while the Presbytery must necessarily move slowly in promoting the work, the student missionaries, as the advance guard, will secure much valuable territory which would otherwise be lost to the Church.

PRESBYTERIES AND STUDENTS.

MR. EDITOR,—In the account of the last meeting of the Guelph Presbytery it was stated that one student had refused to appear before the Committee on Superintendence of Students to be examined on work which had been assigned to him and that in conse-