

old trail here. Reached Pine Creek, eighteen miles from McKinnon's, about noon, and decided to stay for dinner. Pine Creek, like Boggy Creek and some other small streams, takes its rise in the Sand Hills, a low range of hills running east and west north of the Assiniboine. Their elevation scarcely entitles them to the name *Hills*, but where a few houses constitute a city, and a stream of small size is dignified with the same river, one is not apt to be critical. These creeks have their origin quite close to the Assiniboine, but instead of flowing into it, they run north-east, and uniting with the creeks rising in the south-east of the Riding Mountain, constitute the White Mud River, which falls into Lake Manitoba. The Assiniboine unites with the Red River at Winnipeg and falls into Lake Winnipeg.

Soon after crossing Pine Creek the trail forks, one branch going towards Brandon, and the other towards Rapid City and Minnedosa. The northern branch traverses the Big Plain, and was the route selected by the Governor-General in his trip to the west. The Big Plain is about twenty-five miles in length by about eighteen in width. The soil is not nearly so heavy as in the neighbourhood of Winnipeg, but appears as good as that about Portage la Prairie and towards Lake Manitoba. The land is almost all broken up, and good progress has been made in breaking, some having forty or fifty acres under crop. The people are well satisfied with their claims. The crops I saw were heavy, and I have no doubt the yield will be large. When one sees this plain, with good water at no great depth, and wood at no greater distance anywhere than five or six miles, he is astonished to be told that many settlers on their way west passed it by as too light. He is more astonished still to be told that there used in old times to be a notice stuck up at one end of the plain for the benefit of freighters, "Carry wood and water here," and that cattle could scarcely get enough feed while passing along, except in spring. If such was the case, the country is evidently changing. Accustomed as I had been to so many muskegs in the east of Manitoba, it was pleasant to drive here with no fear of being mired. Driving up to a house to inquire for the Rev. Mr. McGregor's place, I saw two small boys within playing checkers. I asked the way. One of them came out, and pointing in the direction I was to take, said, "That is the road." There being no trail, I hesitated. He noticed my hesitation and assuringly said, "You need not be afraid, sir; there is no swamps nor nothin'." I followed his directions, and reached Mr. McGregor's about seven o'clock, seeing "no swamps nor nothin'." I fear I have taken up too much of your space already, and hence must reserve my notice of this important mission field for another letter.

JAMES ROBERTSON.

Chicago, October 22nd, 1881.

DEGREES OF AUTHORITY IN THE ELDERSHIP.

MR. EDITOR,—Your correspondent "J. W.," in a recent number of THE PRESBYTERIAN, lays down, as a ground for different degrees of authority among elders, the principle that "as there is an inequality in the calling, the ordination, the competency and the work, so there is an inequality in the authority. The measure of authority is greater and less, as the measure of grace is."

It would have been well if, instead of reproaching others for ignorance on the subject, he had given proof that his own premises were correct by evidence adduced from the Word of God. A widely diffused spirit of inquiry prevails among the ruling elders of the Church regarding the Divine warrant for and the nature and extent of the duties and powers pertaining to their office, together with a feeling, which may be correct or otherwise, that the office of ruling elder is being denuded of much of its New Testament character and authority. In view of this fact, "J. W." is bound, in the interest of truth, to furnish scriptural warrant for the distinction he makes between elders and elders. Let him, for example, prove directly, or by fair inference from the Word of God, that the call to the teaching elder and the call to the ruling elder should emanate from different sources; that distinctive modes of ordination are sanctioned by apostolic authority, and that by the same authority the elders of a particular congregation are to be adjudged so void of the spirit of their office as to be incapable of performing the duties thereof, in the absence of the one of their number who labours in word and doctrine.

Thus far with reference to call, ordination, competency and work. As regards the "measure of grace" by which "J. W." gauges the "measure of authority," will he kindly point to a single gracious qualification which, by Divine authority, is to characterize one class of elders, which is not also, on the same authority, requisite in the other? W. T.

A CALL FROM HEATHEN LANDS.

BY A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Who are those whose pleading voices
Fall upon the startled ear?
Borne afar o'er sea and ocean—
Trembling words of pain and fear?

From dark lands the cry is sounding—
Lands oppressed by vice and sin:
Open wide your hearts in pity,
Let the plaintive voice come in.

"In gross darkness we are groping—
Poor maimed hands we stretch to you—
Send, oh send the light from Heaven!
Give, oh give the Bible true!

"In fierce hunger's pangs we anguish—
Idols dumb—they mock our need!
Give, oh give the bread from Heaven!
Scatter wide the precious seed!

"In dire thirst our souls are dying!
Give, oh give the waters cool,
That the desert land may blossom—
Watered from the Fountain full!

"In dense gloom the grave is shrouded;
What beyond? Ah, starless night!
Tell us of your risen Saviour—
Of His home of love and light!"

Shall China's millions vainly plead?
India fruitless stretch her hands?
The distant isles in lonely seas?
Dwellers in far Northern lands?

Shall the precious souls now struggling,
Sinking 'mid the storm and strife,
Go down e'en in sight of harbour—
Near to love and light and life?

No! Man the lifeboat! breast the billows!
Throw a rope! All strong hands come!
Help with prayers! All work together!
If by any means "save some!"

And our God will grant His blessing;
Richest fields for Him we'll win.
See the thousands start awakened!
Eager—press to enter in!

See the fields already whitening!
There is work for all to do.
Hasten, Christians! why stand waiting?
The Lord of Harvest calls for you.

Till each kindred, tongue and nation,
Grateful song and prayer shall raise,
"To the Lord who died to save us,
Be for ever glory—praise!"

PRESBYTERIAN STATISTICS.

The "Catholic Presbyterian" for October gives, in a paper by Dr. J. Prince, a comparative statement, extending over six years, of the progress of the American Church. On the whole, the exhibit is satisfactory. But there are two ominous features which have a lesson for us in Canada, as well as for our American brethren. These features are the steady decrease in the number of admissions to Church membership by examination, and in the number of adult baptisms. The first gives in 1876—additions, 48,240; then 43,068; 32,277; 29,196; 26,838; 25,344. This is a decrease of nearly fifty per cent. in six years. The second gives in 1876—baptisms, 15,753; then 15,263; 11,610; 10,018; 9,232; 8,174; again not far short of fifty per cent. decrease—a truly startling result. Dr. Prince accounts for this by the want of revivals. But another question lies behind that. Why are there fewer powerful revivals of late years? May not the increased intelligence of the people have something to do with this? And may it not be true that those exciting methods by which churches in America have been periodically increased have lost their peculiar power? Scepticism in the shape of ignorance of Scripture, and doubt as to a future state, as to sin and redemption; and the existence of God, with immorality which pollutes the imagination by means of modern sensational literature, is doing its work of death, and the world is being more removed from Church influences and Christian education, while the children of the Church are being led away into godlessness and churchlessness. L.

MISSION WORK IN MUSKOKA AND PARRY SOUND.

BY REV. ALLAN FINLAY, BRACEBRIDGE.

(Concluded.)

On Tuesday following, Mr. Leiper having returned home, Mr. Moodie and I took the steamer for the

NORTH SHORE OF THE LAKE,

Sturgeon Falls, some three miles up the river of that name, being our destination. Notice of our intended visit having been forwarded, we found a comparatively large congregation waiting us when the hour of service arrived, comprising all the settlers and Indians who were at home, for miles around. Mr. Moodie preaching, and has the honour of conducting the

FIRST PROTESTANT SERVICE,

so far as we could learn, on the north shore of Lake Nipissing. We might have gone further indeed and held a meeting of Presbytery, as we had a quorum present on the occasion, having in our company "a faithful acting Elder" from the congregation of Angus.

There is doubtless a field here for the churches in the near future, as there is good land along the Sturgeon, which will be settled ere long—the more likely this, as the C. P. R. R., now in course of construction a few miles to the east, will cross this fertile strip. We returned to Nipissing on Wednesday, the whole trip being most enjoyable, rendered so in a great measure by the courtesy and kindness of Captain Burrit, of the "Inter-Ocean," who showed us every attention. We proceeded immediately to

COMMANDA,

some twelve miles south, from which point on Friday we visited the station known as McVettie's, in the Township of Mills. Here we held a service and administered the ordinance of baptism.

The ordinance of the Supper was dispensed at Commanda and Mecunoma on Sabbath, the 28th, Mr. Moodie doing duty at the latter and I at the former station. A good work has been accomplished here this season by Mr. A. Hamilton, the desire being strongly expressed that he may return again next season. The results of this year's work in this whole field will prove the wisdom of the step taken by the Society of Knox College in dividing the field, and giving to three Missionaries the work formerly attempted by two. Anticipations have not been fully realized, it is true, with regard to the settlement of the country, or the building of the railroad; but at the same time work has been accomplished more satisfactorily, and more substantial progress has been made than could possibly have been the case if only two men had been on the field.

We returned to Bracebridge again on the 30th of August, having been gone twenty-seven days, and having travelled 420 miles by driving, riding, rowing walking, and sailing.

No note has been taken in the above report of the following stations and groups, for the reasons given below, viz.: of the Maganetawan group, consisting of five stations, as Mr. Moodie, who was appointed specially by the Presbytery to visit these stations, will report separately as to their condition; nor of the McKellar field, as it was not supplied this season; nor of the station at Katrine in connection with the Emsdale group, as the members here attended the communion services either at Emsdale or Burke's Falls; nor of Bracebridge and associated stations, as I have been absent from them for sixteen Sabbaths since my last report. Service, however, has been given regularly on Sabbath, and I was able to hold the weekly prayer meeting excepting during the month of August.

In looking back over the season just closed, we have every reason for thankfulness for past mercies and hopefulness for the future. During this period 127 persons have been received into the membership of the Church in these districts by profession and certificate, and 100 by baptism, three of these being adults.

I cannot close this report without referring to a matter of deep concern to all who feel an interest in the welfare of our cause in this field. I refer to

THE EXTENSIVE BUSH FIRES,

by which portions of these two districts have been devastated during the past few weeks. We need not refer to the—in some instances—harrowing details, as many of these have already appeared in public print. Many of the settlers have suffered severely. Some of them have lost their all, and find themselves poorer to-