

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

MISSION WORK IN MANITOBA AND THE NORTH WEST.

MR. EDITOR,—There are some weighty matters, which demand thoughtful attention, in connection with our mission work here. I hope it will not be considered out of place for one who has taken a humble share in that work—for now nearly a period of nine years—to ask a small space in THE PRESBYTERIAN to tell our people a few things deemed important, when viewed in the light of the tremendous responsibility resting upon us as a Church, in a land whose inhabitants, not many years hence, will be counted by the million. The day of small things is past with us—our tree has been well and faithfully planted, it has taken root, and is destined to grow. In 1851 the Rev. Dr. Blair founded our cause in the Red River valley. In 1866 the Rev. James Nesbit established our Indian mission work in the great Saskatchewan valley. Rev. Professors Bryce and Hart established our educational institution. Rev. James Robertson in 1874 was called to the pastorate of Knox Church, Winnipeg, and to day we have no less than forty ordained ministers and missionaries actively employed in this great mission field. The field is large, and the work growing with immense rapidity. At the very foot of the Rocky Mountains we have a standard bearer; in the heart of the great Saskatchewan valley we have three fully appointed missionaries. The space between Prince Albert and the Province of Manitoba is being rapidly occupied. Such centres as Touchwood Hills, Qu'Appelle, Regina, Broadview, etc., are being supplied with missionaries this summer. There are three ordained missionaries labouring among the Indian tribes, and two young men are employed as teachers. A fourth missionary is urgently required for the Fort Pelly group, and a teacher to take charge of the school on the Sioux reserve. In looking back, we may well say, What hath God wrought? Hitherto, hath the Lord helped us. But we must not rest satisfied with looking back, we must be looking forward. There is a great work to be done, and a very large share of it will certainly fall to our lot, if we are faithful. More than half of the new comers are Presbyterians. We must follow them, and keep them within our own fold, or they will wander off and join others, or, what is worse still, grow indifferent and worldly, and gradually lapse into a state of semi-heathenism. How, then, are we to grapple with such a work? I answer:

1st. By united prayer to the Lord of the harvest, that He would raise, qualify and send forth men of His own calling into this great harvest field.

2nd. The Church should seek out young men of good abilities and training, wholly devoted to their Master's service, deeply imbued with the missionary spirit, ready to go forth at the call of the Church, to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." I am more and more convinced that graduates fresh from our colleges are the men for this country. They have youth and vigour on their side. As a rule, they are full of enthusiasm, and can accommodate themselves to circumstances, and are at home in any part of their mission field. Another reason why young men are peculiarly adapted as missionaries out here is that a very large percentage of the new settlers is composed of young men, and it takes young men to deal with young men. This last consideration should go far towards determining the Church as to what kind of men she should send out here to do her pioneer mission work. Gradually, the older and more established places will be taken charge of by older men. In view of all this, how important it is to have all our colleges fully and efficiently equipped. These schools of the prophets have a most important part to play in the future history of Presbyterianism in our Dominion—we need them all, there is not one too many. It is, therefore, earnestly hoped that there will be no disposition manifested at the coming General Assembly of our Church to raise any serious objection to the appointment of a theological professor in Manitoba College. As I am very sure that our missionary college has a special work to do, which our colleges in the east cannot well overtake. Professor Scrimger, of Montreal, has been unanimously nominated for that position by our Presbytery, and we feel satisfied, should that gentleman be offered the appointment, and he accept it, that the future success of the college is assured.

3rd. There is another question that follows closely upon this, viz: How are the men thus appointed to be supported? I answer, give them adequate salaries—at least one thousand dollars a year—and let the Church see to it that each man she sends forth upon such a mission may go in full confidence that the whole salary promised will certainly and promptly be paid, year by year, during the period of his appointment. It is better, far better, to have fewer labourers sent out, and have their salaries paid them without fail, than have them sent out to suffer disappointment. There is nothing more damaging to the cause of religion than to have the Church break faith with her missionaries. It is both cruel and unjust to urge men to come out to a country like this, and allow them to suffer from the non-payment of the promised salary. But, what, it may be asked, if the people fail to pay the proportion of the salary expected of them? Well, first of all, I would have the Presbytery within whose bounds the mission field is, make itself as sure as possible that the people are both able and willing to pay the amount promised, before a report of it is sent down to the Home Mission Committee. And, should they fail to pay up what they promised, either in whole or in part, then let the Home Mission Committee pay the missionary the full amount due to him, and let the field be dealt with afterwards. In no case let the Church allow a dollar of arrears to be due any of her missionaries at the end of each financial year. Some of our missionaries have known to their cost what too flattering financial reports sent down to the Home Mission Committee mean, viz., heart crushing arrearages due them for salaries. It is not difficult to understand what effect such arrearages must have on the mind of the poor missionary, in a country where the cost of living is from thirty to fifty per cent. higher than in Ontario. Let us deal with the people wisely. Let us not expect too much of them at the outset. In the too high pressure system I have no faith. It is a process that will never make willing and liberal givers, in the Christian sense of the word, and it is certain that it will utterly fail, if it is often repeated. I have all along felt convinced that the better plan is not to ask nor expect too much at first from a people who have to contend against peculiar difficulties in the earlier stages of settlement, but endeavour to lead them gradually and encouragingly up to a higher standard of Christian liberality. Get them to believe that they can and will do more the next time. Let the Church inspire her missionaries with strong confidence in her financial integrity, and the very best of her sons will be ready to respond when she calls; but, let her fail here, and she need not be surprised to find the best men turn a deaf ear to her call.

There is another point under this head to which I would like to refer, viz: How best to take advantage of the services of ministers of our own Church who are coming out with their families to settle in this country. I have no doubt this class of ministers will increase year by year. Some of them are able and willing to be employed either wholly or partially in doing mission work. There is abundance of room and work for them; but the Presbytery has no fund from which it could supplement what the people themselves might be able to give. The aid of such ministers would prove invaluable during the long winter months, when our students are called home to attend to their studies. It is to be earnestly hoped that the General Assembly will take this matter into consideration, and devise some means by which such aid might be utilized. A special amount voted to each Presbytery out of the Home Mission Fund—say a thousand dollars to each—would be of great assistance.

4th. I would also urge that to each Presbytery be given the full control and responsibility of carrying on mission work within its own bounds, excepting the great missionary Presbytery to the west, which will require the valuable counsel and assistance of the Superintendent of Missions. Such an arrangement would leave the superintendent free to give his whole time and attention to the work to be done in the newer settlements, which in itself will be immense. Besides, such an arrangement, if carried out, will have a beneficial effect upon the Presbyteries themselves, having the sole responsibilities of the work thrown upon them. For example, it is proposed to ask the General Assembly to divide the Presbytery of Manitoba into three. 1st, the Presbytery of Winnipeg; 2nd, Presbytery of Pembina Mountains; 3rd, Presbytery of Portage la Prairie; the last named to be the

great Missionary Presbytery for the time being. Now, what I propose, is, to let the Winnipeg Presbytery attend to its own mission work, without the aid of the Superintendent of Missions. Let the Presbytery of Pembina Mountains do the same. In that case the superintendent will be connected with the Presbytery of Portage la Prairie, until another Presbytery is organized to the west. After which the Portage Presbytery will have the whole responsibility of the work within its own bounds, and so with each successive Presbytery. I think I have made what I mean sufficiently plain. The Rev. Mr. Robertson will have ample room for work when Presbytery after Presbytery is taken off his hands for many years to come—yes, for a lifetime.

There are just two points more to which I would like briefly to refer before I close this letter, which is already too long. The first is regarding the bitterly personal, and might I not say cowardly attack so recently made by some unknown person in the columns of a leading newspaper against the Rev. Mr. Robertson, Superintendent of Missions. All who know Mr. Robertson personally can have but one opinion regarding that attack, that it is both malicious and cowardly. The mark of the coward has always been to strike below the belt. Had the writer confined himself to the strictures and criticisms contained in the first part of his letter, it would be readily conceded that he had a right to do so, as the acts of committees and public men, whether in connection with Church or State, are open to fair and just criticism. But once he leaves that vantage ground, and goes out of his way purposely to make such a personal attack as is contained in the closing part of his letter upon a man who is deservedly esteemed for his personal worth, and beloved for his kindness of heart, he is not entitled to the sympathy of any right-thinking person. Either let him come out of his hiding place and defend his position by proving his statements, if he can, or come forward like a man and make frank acknowledgment of the wrong that he has done Mr. Robertson. This is certainly the more excellent way, because it is the way of peace to himself personally, and satisfaction to all concerned, and, besides, it would free innocent persons from all suspicion in connection with the matter.

The only other point to which I will refer is that I have no personal grievance to complain of since I came to Manitoba and the North-West Territory. I have been paid up all the salary promised me both by the Home Mission Committee and the people among whom it has been my lot to labour. But, at the same time, I am sensible of this, that had I been placed in charge of some mission fields occupied by some of my brother missionaries, who have not been so fortunate in having all the salary promised them paid, I would not be in a position to make such a statement as I have just made, viz.: that I have never been allowed to suffer because of the non-payment of salary. My sole motive in writing this letter, I trust, is, that the interests of our Church may be advanced in this new but rapidly growing mission field.

High Bluff, May 11, 1883.

H. MCKELLAR.

"FEAR GOD AND HONOUR THE KING."

MR. EDITOR,—Yesterday afternoon we at Erskine Church in common with many other Sabbath school workers, just at the time of opening the school had our ears saluted with a fanfare of trumpets and the rat-a-plan of drums, and in answer to our enquiries we found that the volunteer force of our usually quiet city had chosen that afternoon for a street parade. As a natural result the streets were lined with idlers, and among them a considerable number of Sabbath school children, who either absented themselves from their schools altogether, contrary to the wishes and knowledge of their parents, or came so very late to the school as seriously to affect the successful teaching for that day at least. The majority of children never have been, and are not yet Samuels or Timothys; and, in obedience to well understood laws of nature, gravitate towards the most excitement and the best display. To prevent future recurrences of the like, the evil must be struck at the root, and that root is, the authority or authorities, who, in their wisdom, furnish "church parades," which are neither necessary nor useful for the volunteers nor the general body of Christians in the city. In the case of the regular military service I am ready to admit that there must and ought to be an attendance at church in uniform under proper official