

Our Contributors.

MEN WHO WORK ON THE FOUNDATION.

BY KNOXIAN.

We propose to sketch a number of ministers who have done, or are doing work on the foundation of the Presbyterian Church in the western part of Canada. Our list must be limited for the most part to those who are doing special work for the Church as a whole. To sketch every minister who has done foundation work in his own congregation, or in his own immediate neighborhood, would be to sketch nearly every minister between Port Arthur and the Pacific Ocean, together with a large number of the older ministers of Western Ontario. Life is too short for all that.

If all goes well, and if we can get the necessary material—no easy matter, by the way—we may make pen and ink portraits of a few representative men in each of the great departments of our Church work—Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Augmentation, Theological Education and Church legislation.

People who take little or no interest in an abstract discussion of these questions may like a discussion of them in the concrete. It is often a good thing to a living man walking about and acting his part in an article or sermon. The average man is not like the Scotchman who, when brought before the Session for taking a drop too much, said: "He aye liked to talk about they things in the abstract." Most people like to talk and read about things in the concrete. We begin with

THE REV. ALLEN FINDLAY,

Superintendent of Missions in Muskoka and Algoma. Mr. Findlay was appointed to his present position, or rather to the germ of his present large field, in 1875, nearly twenty years ago. There were few people at that time in this northern region, and most of them were settled around the sites of the present towns of Gravenhurst and Bracebridge. The roads were rough and few. The Superintendent travelled by a variety of modes. Sometimes he went on horse-back, sometimes by boat—the propelling power being his own muscles; but more frequently he travelled by the independent railway. The Grand Trunk and the C.P.R. were not running trains through this northern region at that time. Gradually the settlement began to extend and the Superintendent took good care that the mission work extended with equal steps. The Free Grant lands were rapidly taken up; colonization roads were opened in every direction; and wherever a few Presbyterians pitched their tent, the stalwart representative of Presbyterianism opened a mission station. Assuming that the Church sent him there to work for her interests, he worked bravely on and lost no time in cultivating union sentiment. Mr. Findlay never was much of an organic unionist. He knows his business too well to spend time on that line.

Seven years of hard work on a new and rough field, and in all kinds of weather, began to tell a little on a naturally good constitution, and in 1882 Mr. Findlay accepted a call to the Bracebridge congregation, and began work as a "mere pastor"—to use a phrase the origin of which some old Knox men may remember. After spending two years in the pastorate, he was again appointed by the Home Mission Committee to the superintendency, this time to a much larger field. The Committee added the mission fields in the northern part of the Presbytery of Bruce, and, if we rightly remember, some stations from the Presbytery of Lanark and Renfrew. The Home Mission Committee has done many wise things, but it never did a wiser thing than when it put Mr. Findlay in charge of this whole Northern field. Even on the low ground of dollars and cents, the appointment paid the Church, and in the matter of efficient work it paid a hundred times over.

Let us glance for a moment at the field as it now stands, and note the progress that has been made. Roughly speaking the territory covered by this great northern mission field extends about 100 miles from north to south, and about 400 from east to west. When Mr. Findlay was appointed in 1875, there were sixteen stations in Muskoka, within the bounds of the Presbytery of Barrie. Now there are eighty-two, exclusive of thirteen given to the new Presbytery of Algoma three years ago, when that Presbytery was formed. When he was re-appointed in '84, and his field extended, the number of stations in the northern part of the Presbytery of Bruce—now Algoma—was about forty. The number is now ninety, and continually increasing. Seven settled charges have been formed on the field, and a large number of the more important groups are ministered to by ordained missionaries. It is needless to comment on these figures. They speak for themselves. The man who successfully superintends nearly two hundred mission stations—about one-fifth the whole number in the Church—composed of such an endless variety of characters and interests as Muskoka and Algoma present, can well afford to allow his work to speak.

Mr. Findlay has, it is needless to say, strong points as a mission superintendent. He knows his ground as no other man ever did or perhaps ever will know it. Equally at home in a mining town, or a railway town, or a lumber town, or a rural cross roads station, he never loses his head. He understands Muskoka human nature in its almost infinite varieties. He has an amount of patience that Job might have envied. He understands Divinity students and treats them kindly and fairly. He stands no bumptious nonsense from any kind of a missionary, but has enthusiastic admiration for every man who can "work his station." He is a master of details, and details are almost everything in working two hundred mission stations. Though conciliatory enough, when conciliation is the right thing, he has a mind of his own, and never hesitates to do the right thing for the Church, even though the doing of it implies the painful duty of sitting on somebody who wants to run a station in his own interests. He likes his work, and, after all, that is, perhaps, the main secret of his success.

Mr. Findlay was born in Princeton, N. Y., and came to Canada in 1846. His father became pastor of the Presbyterian congregation of Mitchell, Ont., and afterwards of the congregation of Waterdown and Wellington Square. The future Superintendent studied in Knox College, and was inducted into the charge of Granton in the Stratford Presbytery in 1867, where he laboured until appointed to his present position in 1875. Mr. Findlay is still in the prime of life, and to all human appearance has many years of usefulness before him. With the opening of new railways and the settlement of new townships in Northern Ontario, his work is likely to increase, and we are sure every friend of mission work will earnestly desire that the Superintendent may be long spared to follow up settlement with the blue banner of Presbyterianism.

FERDINAND DE LESSEPS.

BY S.

On the seventh day of December last, in the suburbs of Paris, there passed away one of the great men of the nineteenth century, Ferdinand De Lesseps. During the 89 years of his remarkable life he touched the zenith and the nadir of earthly achievement, and, unfortunately for his fame, the lowest point came last. His public life commenced at twenty years of age and for twenty years he served in the diplomatic branch of French statecraft with great brilliancy. Part of this time he was stationed at Alexandria and his thoughts were turned to the frequently mooted project of uniting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean by means of a canal cut through the Isthmus of Suez. On retiring

from the diplomatic service he plunged into scientific investigation, assured himself that the project was feasible, and set himself to accomplish it. The physical difficulties in the way of the enterprise were comparatively easy to overcome but the commercial and political obstacles were so formidable as to demand an amount of energy, enthusiasm and diplomatic resource such as only the Kingliest men possess. But De Lesseps was a kingly man. In 1854 the work was undertaken, and in 15 years more the Suez Canal was an accomplished fact. It cost something like one hundred million dollars and was a financial success from the first. It shortened the voyage from Europe to India by 3,700 miles, almost one-third of the journey. It so changed the current of European trade that the decayed cities of the Mediterranean began to renew their youth. It converted Cairo into the geographical centre of the British Empire and led up to the English occupation of Egypt. Honors fell to De Lesseps like snow flakes on a winter's day. Queen Victoria made him a Knight of the Star of India. London conferred on him the freedom of the city. The French Academy awarded him the Empress' prize of ten thousand francs. The Geographical Society of France elected him its president. He was decorated by almost every sovereign in Europe.

Had M. De Lesseps been content to rest on these well-earned laurels his fame henceforth would have ranked with that of the greatest men of the century, but his imagination was fired with the idea of uniting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by a ship canal cut through the Isthmus of Panama. The difficulties of the task he seems never to have sufficiently weighed. It was a work of a widely different character from his Egyptian achievement. The physical features, the political conditions, the climate, and the character of the population were all different. Then, also, De Lesseps at forty was under the necessity of soliciting the aid of such persons and personages as his judgement approved. De Lesseps at sixty attracted "all sorts and conditions of men," as honey attracts flies. The French people advanced their money freely on the security of his great fame. He, himself, believed in himself with immovable conviction and acted in good faith to the end. But the Panama Canal speedily resolved itself into a ditch in which to bury the savings of the French peasantry and the honor of the French gentry. None but a genius could have deferred the collapse as long as De Lesseps did, but when it came it was awful. He himself sunk into the senility of extreme age and never fully realized it. He was condemned by the courts and his son was committed to a felon's cell, but the old man was unconscious of it all, until on the seventh day of December he passed peacefully away.

The lesson of Ferdinand De Lesseps' career may be summed up in that well-known American proverb, "Be sure you are right, then go ahead." For his great achievement in Egypt he laid a solid foundation of careful, patient, thorough examination. He studied every aspect of the problem. He was sure that he was right. Then all the vigor of will and skill which he possessed were brought to bear on its realization until the work was done. At Panama the first process was seriously curtailed. Imagination was allowed to do duty for examination and supposition for certainty. All the determination and diplomacy he possessed were brought to bear as fully as they had ever been, and the result was an unspeakably great disaster.

"Be sure you are right, then go ahead." Which end of that proverb is the more important would be hard to say. Many fail in life for want of due consideration. Many fail for want of due exertion. But the most disastrous failures are the failures of those brilliant geniuses whose enthusiasm and persistency excite confidence in undertakings whose outcome is uncertain and not thoroughly considered. I love an enthusiastic man, but before such a man asks others to follow him he should be very sure that he has looked both before

and after. Otherwise, even with good intentions, he may be among the most dangerous of men. The Panama ditch is a type of thousands which await souls and bodies and substance of men; and when the blind lead the blind, the end of the journey is not difficult to foresee.

Toronto, Dec. 31st.

REMIT ON STUDENTS' GRADUATING.

BY REV. J. ROBERTSON, D.D.

The Home Mission Committee (W. D.) recommended the General Assembly to enact "that all graduating students, and ministers received from other churches, be required to give, at least, one year's service in the mission field before being eligible for a call." The recommendation was discussed by the Assembly and remitted to Presbyteries and the senates of the colleges of the Church, to consider and report to next Assembly. Since there has been no discussion of the subject through the press, and since only about one fourth of the ministers of the Church were at the Assembly, will you allow me to give the opinion of one member of the Home Mission Committee? For years the inadequate supply of our Home Mission field has been before the Church; but the remedies provided have been only partial. The summer session in Manitoba College reduced the winter vacancies in Western Canada one third; but this is not enough. According to the report of the Home Mission Committee, there were between 60 and 70 missions, with (say) 200 stations that received supply only during the summer last year, and over 30 more that received supply for only nine months. And much of the supply given in other fields was unsatisfactory, Presbyterians being obliged to employ catechists without mental training or experience, in important missions, rather than close the church door. It is difficult to estimate the loss that the Church has sustained, during the long years of the past, by this unwise policy. In certain parts of Canada Presbyterianism has been smitten by a wasting disease, the result of neglect and exposure to hostile influences. The Committee has its money going to support a mission that might soon become a spirited congregation, if continuously supplied; but the money is often wasted and development arrested by the policy of summer supply and winter starvation. The people do not hibernate, nor do other churches; and our people have before them the contrast between our methods and the methods of other churches to our disadvantage. The Home Mission report tells us, e.g., that places like Kagawong, with 67 families and 54 communicants, and Gore Bay with 80 families and 168 communicants, were without supply last winter. With plenty of men in the Church—more than can find regular employment—does it not look as if something should be done to remedy this? This winter, I was told, probationers, in some cases, were getting only 4 or 5 Sabbath's supply in the quarter, being elbowed out the rest of the time by graduating students and others. The Committee proposes to send our young men to the frontier for one year that we as a Church may reap where we have sown, and that we may not be expending money with the sure prospect that not we, but some one else, is to reap the benefit.

Let me give a few general facts. The policy of summer supply and winter neglect has long been pursued by us in Central Ontario and with what result? Take 35 constituencies between York and Glengarry, and you find, according to the Dominion census, that the population increased in 20, and decreased in 15; Presbyterians increased in 20, and decreased in 15; Methodists increased in 25, and decreased in 10; Anglicans increased in 15, and decreased in 20.

Why should the Methodist Church show in that district to such advantage, as compared with the Presbyterian Church? Is