

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SABBATH DESECRATION.

MR. EDITOR,—Permit me to follow up the remarks which I made upon this subject last week, with a few words more upon the consequences that are likely to follow upon this systematic and bold desecration of the Sabbath, especially by our present railway corporations. Let no one suppose that the disregard of the Lord's day will stop at its present point, if no attempt is made to put an end to it altogether. The experience and history of all the continental countries of Europe and of the United States clearly show that the tendency of this evil is to spread until only the semblance of a day of rest is left. Why should not large manufacturing establishments do work also on Sundays, if railways may do it, at first under the pressure of a push of work, then as a matter of course? And why should not our daily papers be issued on Sunday as well as other days? Why should not the farmer, in spring and harvest at least, work seven days in the week? Workingmen of all kinds should especially watch and take a stand against this growing danger, if they wish to preserve for themselves a day of quiet rest and for worship. If the amount of work done on the Sabbath is increased, pleasure-seeking will also most certainly be increased, and the facilities for obtaining it will be supplied, and thus a host of temptations and difficulties be thrown around and in the way of the young growing up, which must help to perpetuate and extend the evil. This is no mere fancy-sketch, conjured up by prejudice or morbid fear, but what can be abundantly established by the history of Sabbath desecration in other countries. It is needless to point out how vitally and detrimentally this must soon affect the religious life of the whole nation.

If this take place, as it must, then the most injurious consequences will follow to ordinary morality in business, to our recreations, and the orderly and law-abiding character of the body of the people. Let me quote from an article in the "Catholic Presbyterian," already referred to: "But the Sunday question is not only a question of religion, it is also and most particularly one of public morality; and those are wrong who declare the prosperity of morals to be independent of the fourth commandment. Let people be occupied with worldly care and labours every day alike, without having any fixed time of rest; let them become alienated from regular public worship, at which their minds are again and again led into that eternal truth which combines religion and morality, and can alone lay the foundation of both in man's soul; let them also give up private intercourse with Him who is the centre of the Gospel, and you will soon experience what you perhaps did not expect, that their minds will be emptied of both godliness and conscientiousness, and thus the souls of men will become like a devastated field, which has been neither cultivated nor received rain and sunshine in due season. There you will see rank weeds of every kind growing up from the neglected soil in appalling luxuriance—the thorns of dark and cruel desires, and the thistles of envy, hatred and malice, with every kind of evil passion destroying souls and devastating human society. Indeed, the experience we have had in Germany proves most evidently that religion, and in connection with it morality, really depends upon the due observance of the Sabbath."

If the foundations be destroyed, fear may well be felt for the lengths to which immorality will go. Not only will noble aims and high aspirations of every kind become forgotten or despised things, but license, a craving for and rising in vicious indulgence, and general lawlessness will prevail. The evidence of all this may be seen in the history of the past, and what is taking place before our eyes, if not yet unmistakably at home, at least not very far abroad. "All these moral corruptions which have penetrated the body of our people," says the writer already quoted, "have their origin in the irreligious principles which have been allowed to take possession of the minds of the people; and we cannot doubt that the neglect of the fourth commandment has in a great measure been the cause of this." Experience and history attest what we would expect to find in the nature of things, that the maintenance of religion and of its salutary power in the community, and of the bonds of ordinary morality are inseparately bound up with the faithful observance of the fourth commandment. The conse-

quences are sufficiently serious to alarm not merely the professing Christian, but they may well awaken the anxiety and concern of every good citizen and well-wisher of the country. How can we expect to escape the evil results so numerous and so great which have fallen upon other nations who have followed to its end the course of Sabbath desecration we are as a people comparatively yet but entering upon? If we will but honestly and calmly look at these results, we will see that they are fraught with so many and such great perils to the nation in every way, as may well awaken all who are concerned for its true well-being out of their apathy, and induce them to put forth every possible effort in every legitimate way to at once counteract to some extent, and at length eradicate entirely, what threatens to mar and overcloud the fair prospects of our rising Dominion. W. D. BALLANTYNE.

Pembroke, February 1st, 1883.

HOME MISSIONS IN MUSKOKA AND PARRY SOUND.

MR. EDITOR,—During the last year I have frequently purposed giving your readers an account of the duties, hardships, and joys of Home Mission work in these regions. Here you may ask, "Who hindered you? THE PRESBYTERIAN is always glad to publish accounts of Home Mission work." Knowing that this is true, I make no excuse for the delay, but whatever the hindrance hitherto, I will, with your permission, now lay before your readers some facts, gathered in an experience of over two years. I pray that God may bless this narrative for good, and that it may come under the eye of some "whose heart the Lord has touched," be the means of stirring up the gift that is in them, so that when the cry for more labourers is again heard they may exclaim, like the prophet of old, "Here am I; send me."

Although Muskoka and Parry Sound are much nearer home than Manitoba and the Great North-West, I do not think the members of our Church know half as much about them as they do about that great lone land. Brandon is better known than Bracebridge; the Porage than Huntsville; Regina, though only a few months settled, than Nipissing, a place settled over twelve years and only three days distant from Toronto in summer and four in winter.

To obtain an intelligent view of the extent of these districts, draw a parallelogram, the sides 120 miles and the base seventy-five. Scattered over the area contained within these lines are some forty-five preaching stations, and a population of 30,000 souls, 27,000 settlers, and at least 3,000 lumbermen and railway labourers, working in the woods and on the C. P. Railway on the northern shore of Lake Nipissing. Our Church has only two settled charges in this large field—viz.: Gravenhurst and Bracebridge. When the student missionaries were withdrawn in September last I believe I was the only Presbyterian missionary left north of Bracebridge during the months of October and November. Since that time Rev. J. Jamieson, ordained missionary, has been stationed at Maganetawan, and a catechist missionary in the Emsdale field. The Presbytery of Barrie have used every effort to obtain supply, but the men are not forthcoming.

The Rev. A. Findlay retired from the office of Superintendent when he was settled last year over the Bracebridge congregation. His loss to this mission field was great. Always punctual to his appointments, he was perfectly conscientious in the discharge of his duties.

Exception may be taken to my use of the word conscientious with regard to mission work; but there are two kinds of conscientious discharge of duty known in Muskoka. Let me illustrate this. A minister or missionary has two appointments on the Sabbath. They are situated perhaps ten or twelve miles distant from each other, or they may be separated by a lake. A storm comes on, or it may have raged all morning, and after the service there is no sign of abatement. One man is perfectly conscious that he cannot reach the other station, and that the people will not expect him in such a storm; and also that no one would think of coming out to the service in a day like that. The other man is conscious of the discomfort and perhaps danger of the road, but he is conscious also that no one shall be disappointed if it be possible for him to get through, so he tries to get through, and mostly always succeeds. Now, both men may be conscientious, but the last is the man for Muskoka,

and the other is not. To cross a lake during a storm of wind in a birch bark canoe requires nerve, and, let me add, a good deal of practice. We could all depend on Mr. Findlay's appearance if an appointment had been made. Every man who has laboured in this mission has not the same record. May the Master provide another man for this work, whose sense of duty will enable him to face difficulties and surmount obstacles and hardships of storm and travel without flinching. I trust I will be excused for hinting that the man appointed to the office of Superintendent ought to be a man in the enjoyment of perfect physical health, in the prime of life, and all the better if he is a bachelor, and likely to remain one. A married minister with a family to educate would, for very obvious reasons, not be so likely to remain in the work, however well he might be fitted for it. Changes are generally a hindrance; it requires time to grasp the requirements of the work, and the best way to carry them out.

The reports from Home Missions that I have seen published during the past year have generally, I think, described them as prospering or a success. Now this seems curious to me, and it does not correspond with my own experience. I know of missions that are not so prosperous to day as they were two years ago. The chief reason for this is, no doubt, the lack of men; but that is not always the reason. Rose-coloured reports are a weakness to any cause. It may be a harmless weakness, but is a weakness, nevertheless. As I wish all your readers to peruse this paper, and those that may follow, in which I will guide them over a new field of labour and describe my first visit to the four different stations composing that field. It is possible some of them may wish to know something of the age and appearance of their guide. Fifty years have passed over my head, still I am hale and hearty, of substantial appearance; I turn the scales at 196 pounds; but, for all that, I am able, when necessity or duty requires, to walk my twenty miles and not be completely knocked up at the end of the journey. I do not say I like such long walks, or that I take many of them, but when necessary, as it often is, I can make them without a grumble, thanking God that He has given me health and strength to go forward with the work it has pleased Him to permit me to do in this part of His great harvest field.

At the last half-yearly term I received instructions from the Presbytery of Barrie to leave my old field at Emsdale and proceed north to the Commanda and Nipissing fields for the winter, and on the second day of November last I started to carry out these instructions.

After doing justice to a breakfast of venison and potatoes, two products for which Muskoka takes first rank, I tucked my trousers into my boot tops, hooked my umbrella through the handles of my carpet sack, slung that over my shoulder, bade good-bye to my old and valued friends at Katrine, fifty miles north of Bracebridge, who wished me God-speed in my new field of labour, and then marched over a very muddy road to Burk's Falls, five miles distant, where I got on board the little steamer "Pioneer," which brought me safely down the Maganetawan River, twenty five miles, to Maganetawan village. One word describes the journey down the river; "dreary" is the word—few clearings, a winding river, mostly low, sedgy banks, that widen into a small lake as you near the village. My old friend, Mr. Leonard, Methodist missionary stationed at Maganetawan, met me at the boat. With him I sojourned for the night at the house of Mr. Best, Crown Lands Agent, and one of the most active members of the Presbyterian Church in Maganetawan. The impression made upon me by the appearance of the village was that it was more pitchforked than planned. Some think it picturesque. If that means buildings scattered in the most irregular manner, crooked streets with deep mud holes in places, then it deserves the title. It has three churches—Presbyterian, Methodist, and Church of England. The Presbyterian church is a nice building; the Methodist is not yet finished. There are two good stores in the village, and there are also two benevolent institutions, run under the sheltering wing of the Trades' Benevolent Association. Were I ever to attend a meeting of the Trades' Benevolent Association I would look for Satan either in the chair or immediately behind it. Next morning at half after seven I got on board the stage, and five hours afterwards arrived at Mecunoma, twelve miles north. The road was the worst I had yet seen, even in Muskoka. Mecunoma may be an