

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### NOTES FROM STRATFORD.

Stratford is a good town, is the county-seat of Perth and is beautifully situated on the river Avon. The locality on which the town is built was bought from the Government in 1827, and until 1840 the village was known as "Little Thames." The citizens evidently had a love for classic names, for the town wards are named Avon, Falstaff, Hamlet, Romeo, and Shakespeare. The population is about 8,000, and the ambitious citizens look forward to the time when at no distant day their flourishing town will be gazetted a city. The progress of the town has been rapid and apparently uninterrupted, the first store having been opened in 1834, and in 1858 it was incorporated as a town. Stratford is an important station on the G. T. R., is the junction of the Buffalo and Goderich branch of the same road and is also the terminus of the Port Dover and Lake Huron Railway. The streets are ornamented with good stores and buildings, which are an evidence of the prosperity of the place, while the private dwellings and residences in the outskirts of the town render the appearance more like that of cities. There are three good live papers supported here, which are respectably got up and ably conducted. The "Herald" is an excellent paper. The proprietor, Mr. Robb, is a worshipper in St. Andrew's Church.

#### THE SCHOOLS.

In this interest Stratford has not been neglectful, and whilst some of the citizens say that they have more children than any other town of the same size, still there is ample accommodation for them all. There is a Central School, a Grammar School, a number of ward schools, and another in course of erection.

#### THE CHURCHES

are ten in number, which comprise the various forms of faith which are to be found in country towns. The church buildings are good—indeed, creditable to the town—prominent among which stands

#### KNOX CHURCH,

which deserves to be classed among the finest churches in the province. It is built of white brick and has a spire two hundred feet high. This church was erected in 1872 at a cost of \$20,000. The Rev. Thomas Macpherson, who is still hale and healthy, was the first pastor. He organized the congregation in 1849. The salary then *promised* was \$300 per year. The salary now paid is \$2,000. Mr. Macpherson was born in Ireland and held a charge there for some years. He has for over a quarter of a century been identified with the Canadian Church, and has been looked upon as one of her most laborious and gifted ministers, and as a proof of the estimation in which he is held by his brethren, he has been chosen to the Moderator's chair. Mr. Macpherson belonged to a "school" which, I regret to say, is beginning to disappear in the Church, and who very properly are jealous of any innovations in our forms of worship. In the congregation of Knox Church and the beautiful building in which they worship Mr. Macpherson has left an enduring monument of his work and worth. A short time ago he wished to be relieved from the active duties of the congregation, with which request the Assembly complied, and after a short vacancy the congregation called the Rev. P. McFarland McLeod, of Birkenhead, England. Mr. McLeod is a Canadian, and was educated partly at Coburg College. He is a comparatively young man, is an eloquent preacher, and is deservedly popular with his congregation. Last evening was his prayer-meeting night, and if the attendance at the prayer-meeting be any indication of the spiritual health and life of the congregation, a stranger would conclude very favorably regarding both. The lecture-room was filled with an attentive audience, who seemed much interested in Mr. McLeod's address, which was pointed, eloquent, and very earnest. The hymns used were Moody and Sankey's collection. Mr. McLeod leading the singing.

#### ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

which is one of the oldest churches in the town, is situated on St. Andrew's Street, and was first organized in 1838 in connection with the church in Woodstock, then afterwards, in 1848, in connection with the church in North Easthope; and in 1857 it was floated as a separate charge. The church was rebuilt in 1866 at a cost of \$8,000. St. Andrew's has had a

succession of able ministers, the first being Rev. Mr. Bell, who was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Millar, who was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. George, who was a Professor in Kingston College, and who was succeeded by the Rev. W. J. Wilkins, A.M. The present pastor is the Rev. Mr. Waits, who was settled here about eighteen months ago, and who has infused new life into the congregation. Mr. Waits is an Englishman. He came to this country about eight years ago. He is a young man of more than average ability, and gives promise of taking a good position in our Church. Since his settlement here the congregation has increased considerably, and his popularity in the congregation and neighborhood generally justifies the congregation in their selection of a pastor. It is gratifying to find that Presbyterianism has kept pace with the rapid growth of our rising, provincial towns, and is occupying such a position throughout the country. Nor is there any reason why it should be otherwise. Let Presbyterians be true to the faith of their forefathers, give no countenance to error, come from whatever quarter it may, go forward unitedly, disseminating the "incorruptible seed of the Word," and our Church will continue to "break forth on the right hand and on the left," and keep gathering into her folds "such as shall be saved." K.

*Albion Hotel, Stratford, 20th Sept.*

### MISSION WORK ON THE UPPER OTTAWA. III.

MR. EDITOR,—In my last communication, by means of a narrative of personal experience, some idea was given of the manner in which missionary work has to be conducted in this region. This letter is to be devoted to some account of the field itself, more particularly that part of it visited on this occasion. The statements given have been derived partly from personal knowledge, partly from statistics furnished me by our missionary, Mr. Mitchell, who has been indefatigable in his labours of exploration, and who accordingly has been able to supply very full and correct particulars of the whole district.

First, Its Extent.—The region covered by Mr. Mitchell's labours and travels reaches from Roche Capitaine on the Ottawa river to the head of Lake Temiscamingue, a distance of one hundred and forty-five to one hundred and fifty miles in length. On the west of the Ottawa it reaches from the Narrows on Lake Noyabonsing, thirty-five miles from the village of Mattawan, to the Kippewa river and lake and their tributaries on the east, where the most remote settler is about one hundred miles from the village. Scattered over all this widespread district are Protestant families, a good share of them being Presbyterian, and many live in secluded places quite off the common highways of travel, and can only be reached by walking on foot or by travelling in birch bark canoes, making a very great addition to the distances between the extremities of the field. If to this be added the Chalk river mission field, not less than from forty to fifty miles in length, and following the course of the Ottawa more closely and, therefore, not so widely extended as that of the Mattawan, we have the whole of our mission district on the Upper Ottawa.

Second, The Nature of the Field.—As regards the country, it is throughout its whole extent rough and wild, some parts of it very much so, involving a great deal of labour, exposure, and fatigue to the missionary at all seasons. The country is as yet and must for many years continue to be, poor in resources. Timber, in fact, is the one great industry upon which everything else depends, and when that is depressed or fails every other is paralyzed in proportion. This being the nature of the country, as regards *population*, it is necessarily sparse, and for the most part poor. It is here and there a Protestant family, or a small handful of families, living among Roman Catholics, struggling against all the adverse circumstances which that implies, to which must be added that the larger proportion of their male members are engaged in the lumber work away from home a large part of the year, in the shanties in winter, and on rafts on the river in spring and summer. In such a country, with a population so straitened in their circumstances, surrounded by Roman Catholic influences, engaged in an occupation not favourable to steady religious or ecclesiastical growth, and it may be added very fluctuating, it is manifestly unreasonable and hopeless to look for the same results in organized and growing stations which usually in more favoured localities follow from mis-

sionary work. It must for a *long time* to come remain a purely mission field and make a heavy demand upon the funds of the Church. And yet so far from the prospect of organized and self-supporting stations and churches existing here being so remote, leading us to slacken our efforts or withhold our support, should not the isolated and unfavourable situation of our countrymen and co-religionists in all this wide region excite our deepest sympathy and inspire to greater effort on their behalf? I know how well-disposed our Home Mission Committee is, according to the means placed at its disposal, to take such a field into its favourable consideration, and as the present is a time of extreme difficulty with us in all money matters, owing to the long-continued depression, almost to the extent of general failure, of the lumber trade for the time being, I trust they may be felt in their full weight at its approaching meeting.

Third, The Importance of this Field.—It is of great importance, in the first place just because it is so purely a missionary character, because the scattered families through all that region need the gospel to counteract the deadening influences by which they are surrounded to prevent them from falling a prey to Roman Catholicism or to something worse. In the second place as our mission stations are being pushed in the direction of Lake Nipissing—this is the link which is to connect our work in the east and west, and must for that reason alone if for no other be kept up. Besides, I believe it to be a fact that a majority of the Protestant families in this district will be found to be Presbyterians, and we cannot desert them. Again, the Canada Pacific Railway which is being built just now from Pembroke on to the south end of Lake Nipissing will, while the work is going on, require the employment of a large number of men who should be looked after, and will also lead to the opening up and settlement of the country wherever land fit for agriculture can be found. These again will require mills, and small villages, though distant, will in time spring up; in that aspect also it is important. Besides, I do not know of any Protestant Church except our own which has undertaken any regular work among the shanty-men, and our mission stations on the Upper Ottawa are of great importance, and may become of still greater as points from whence we may carry on that work most effectively.

Fourth, *How* it should be worked.—The means of reaching it have been indicated, the kind of men suitable for this district is also apparent enough from the account which has been given of its character. Two ordained missionaries of the right stamp could find ample work and a large field for evangelization, both amongst English and French speaking settlers, Protestants and Roman Catholics. Living is expensive in all that region, and there would necessarily be a great deal of tear and wear, so that missionaries would need to be well paid. Their salaries should, if possible, be guaranteed to them at the outset, and might be drawn in part from the funds for French Evangelization, the Lumber Mission, the Home Mission, and the contributions of the people. With respect to these last, they should be asked *directly* for the Church, and not for any particular individual as in a settled charge. The missionary could in this way urge his plea far more effectively than in any other, and many advantages besides would be found to attend this plan. With respect to religious services, ordinances, and spiritual good, much, most indeed, would have to be done by visitation from house to house, and if the distribution of the Scriptures, good books, and serial literature were added to oral teaching, it would be a very great boon to the people and means of usefulness. And lastly, instead of insisting upon a certain number of families or individuals before any organization could be effected, and elders elected and ordained, I would suggest the relaxation as long as necessary of our ordinary modes of procedure, and that wherever four or five or half-a-dozen people could be gathered together, the missionary should be allowed, at suitable times, to dispense the Lord's Supper without the presence of any other elder or the usually accompanying services which are observed in settled congregations. As the country became settled up this would give place as a matter of course to the more secular and orderly methods observed in the Church. If some such system were to be adapted, and if men can be found willing to undertake this work and faithfully to do it, they would be doing a good work for our Church, and what is more, would become the instruments of manifold and great blessing to a needy but warm-hearted people.