

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

ITEMS OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY.

MR. EDITOR,—I have noticed, with great interest, the recent communications in your esteemed paper on "Early Presbyterian History in Canada," and herewith contribute some items that may prove interesting with reference to my grandfather, the late Rev. Robert McDowall, the pioneer of our Church in this country. There seems to be now very insufficient data to draw from. The old homestead in Fredericksburg was unfortunately burned about two years ago, and with it nearly all of his posthumous writings and books. The two sons, John and Ebenezer, who were both in the ministry, the former in New York City, the latter in Michigan, have long since been called to their rest. The only daughter, Mrs. Carpenter, is now living in the State of New Hampshire.

I have as a legacy from my father, the late James A. McDowall, a good-sized volume entitled, "A registry of marriages in the Province of Upper Canada, celebrated by the Rev. Robert McDowall, minister of the united congregations of Ernestown, Fredericksburgh and Adolphustown." Reversed, it is inscribed, "A registry of Baptisms," etc., as above. The former contains 752 entries of marriages from 1800 to 1822; an omission then occurs from Feb., 1822, to April, 1831, a loss of over nine years' record. Presuming that the last year preceding the omission, with the first following, would indicate the average during the intervening years, we would have 240 to add to the above. From 1831 to 1836 I find recorded 118 marriages, which would make the number to that date 1110. I find no record for the remaining five years of his ministry, which were active to within a few days of his death. He preached his last sermon in Kingston only two weeks previous to that event. If we had his Registry complete, it is scarcely probable that any other minister of the Church could show so many marriage celebrations. The record of baptisms seems also to be incomplete. It contains, however, 1638 entries.

The Registry is classified as follows: Ernestown, Fredericksburgh, Sophiasburgh, Adolphustown, Camden, Marysburg, Hallowell, Richmond, Pittsburg, Cramahe, Ameliastown, Sidney, Thurlow, Hamilton, Rawdon, Amherst Island, Tyendinaga, Loughboro, Murray, Kingston, Sheffield, Portland, Plainsfield, Belleville. He made long journeys on horseback and on foot, often preferring the latter mode—traversing the Bay of Quinte by canoe. The oldest surviving inhabitants relate many interesting incidents of his ministry in this district. In many places he travelled through an unbroken wilderness, relying on friendly Indians as guides. Mrs. Carpenter, writing of him, says: "I remember hearing him say that he let his horse drink from the River Thames in London," indicating that his missionary labors extended at least that far west.

He was born 25th July, 1768, at Ballstown, N.Y., ordained in the Reformed Dutch Church at Albany, came to Canada 1796, married December, 1800, at Picton, to Hannah, daughter of Ebenezer Washburn (a U.E. Loyalist), and sister of the Hon. Simeon Washburn. Died 3rd August, 1841. His remains are interred near the old church in South Fredericksburgh.

ROBERT J. MCDOWALL.

Demorestville, 30th Sept., 1878.

[We shall be happy to hear further from our correspondent. Such "items" are of great interest to our readers.—ED. C. P.]

AN EXPLANATION.

MR. EDITOR,—Permit me, through your columns, to rectify, before the Church, my own position as a Presbyterian Probationer, as well as prevent a great deal of trouble, during the present quarter, to the gentlemen connected with the distribution of supply to the vacancies, in the various Presbyteries of our Church.

Having had my name entered on the roll of Probationers, available for distribution, in the quarter commencing with October, last year, after five months service, through the severe and protracted illness of my wife, who has died lately, I was obliged to withdraw from the distant fields to which I was sent; and I accordingly made application, at the end of the second quarter, to have my name erased from the regular list of supply. For some reason or other, my

request was not granted. Its retention on the list, I would like to believe, was meant in kindness to me. Nevertheless, I must say, that compliance with my wish would have saved a very great deal of trouble to the various gentlemen connected with the Presbyterian distribution of probationers, as well as much annoyance to vacant congregations; and it would, besides, have prevented myself from appearing in a very unfavourable character before the Church.

I have just learned lately, that my name has never been erased from the roll for distribution, and that it has again appeared on the list of October, in the present year. I confess, that I feel not a little annoyed, annoyed because, among other things, for months past, I have received no communications from gentlemen respecting any appointments whatever from this source, not even a copy of the list of probationers and vacancies for the last three quarters, but more annoyed still, that my name, for the time being, should be so persistently kept on the list of travelling probationers against my request.

With regard to the list of October, 1878, as I learn that Brockville and Ottawa are among the Presbyteries to be supplied by me, I may say, that they are just as inaccessible to me as ever. Having a motherless family of four young children now in charge, I cannot see my way clear to travel, and remain away, such distances from home.

I find no fault with this probationary scheme of the Church. I know the arrangement is intended for all parties whom it suits, and who are able to take advantage of it. It aims at the general good. For my part, I cannot, at present, take advantage of it, and so, doing the next best thing, I must just make more direct application to vacancies nearer home for a hearing. I make the confession honestly and openly, and so far as I understand my duty to God and to the Church, I shall be right in doing as I purpose. However, if any person be so unkind, as to cast a stone at me as a malefactor, he is welcome to do so. Let him remember, however, that it will bump on a good many other shoulders besides mine.

I trust I shall not be understood as speaking disrespectfully of any of the gentlemen associated with the distribution of probationers. I certainly do not mean any disrespect. As to the blame, I am willing to assume my own share of it, for not looking after this matter more closely before now. By inserting this in your columns, however, you will prevent much trouble and vexation to both distributors and vacancies during the present quarter, as well as exonerate me from more blame than belongs to me.

ALEXANDER NICOL, Probationer.

Owen Sound, Oct 3rd., 1878.

MISSION NEWS - TRINIDAD.

[The following letter from the Rev. A. J. Grant, of the Trinidad Mission, to Mr. W. A. Johnson, superintendent of the Bay Street Church Sabbath School, Toronto, has been handed to us for publication.]

MY DEAR SIR,—I am advised by Dr. McGregor, of Halifax, of the liberality of your Sabbath School in contributing \$40 for the support of a monitor in a Coolie School. This expression of your kindly interest in our work I greatly appreciate, and more especially as I felt that my visit to Toronto in 1876 had been a failure, so far as awakening an interest in our mission was concerned. Yours was the only Sabbath School that I had the privilege of addressing. Accept, then, my sincere thanks, and be pleased to convey this expression of gratitude to the Rev. Mr. Smith and the Sabbath School.

Perhaps it may be interesting to learn something of our situation and work. Eighty years ago this island fell into the hands of the English. After the abolition of slavery the estates were in danger of being abandoned, as regular labor could not be commanded. After various unsatisfactory efforts to meet the want felt, the Government turned to the East—to India and to China—to seek laborers. The first importation was in 1845. A few thousand were brought from China; perhaps some 1500 of them and their descendants still remain amongst us. The great body of immigrants is from Central and Upper India. The language chiefly spoken is Hindostani, and it is in this language the missionaries instruct the adults. The children are taught English.

Annually about 2,000 arrive from India and about 400 return. None can return under five years. At the end of ten years a free passage is given back. A ship leaves in a few days. My ablest catechist goes

in her to visit his heathen mother and family, to tell them of Jesus and His salvation. He longs for their salvation. He intends returning after a year's absence. Having found Christ in the West he goes to the East to make Him known. For five years he has wrought with great fidelity. One of Mr. Christie's converts, of Brahmin caste, goes to Indore to his heathen friends. I sincerely trust he may be of service to Mr. Douglas.

Coolies are annually arriving, and many more are required. This will appear when I say that the island has an area of 1754 square miles, and that not above 200 square miles are yet under cultivation. The Government is expending large sums in improving and extending roads; without these the cultivation could not be extended. Add to this the introduction of railways now under construction, and we can reasonably anticipate at an early day the cultivation of lands hitherto unreclaimed. To do this work laborers are required. The planter turns to India for the supply. The planting interests require 5,000 this year, and only 2,000 are expected. The demand must continue, and I suppose there is no reasonable ground to fear the interruption of the supply. From this it is clear that annually we may expect a large accession to our present heathen population. After a voyage of three months from Calcutta, they arrive with home notions, customs, prejudices, etc., so that ours is virtually a mission if not to Hindostan, yet to Hindoos. We are co-workers with Messrs. Douglas and Campbell and their Zenana helpers.

The people are more accessible here than at home in India. Here the people, on hearing, readily and candidly enquire; in India they are afraid to exercise this freedom. If convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, they can avow it here without fearing the consequences sure to follow at home.

In our labors we have very much to cheer us. On every hand we are opening small schools. These schools are a door of entrance to the people. Through them they come to understand that we are their friends. When a kindly, friendly feeling is awakened, they listen to our message. Many have truly believed and turned to the Lord.

At present I will not write more, but will await your reply; and please assure the young people that I will gladly, as I may be able, answer any question which they may propose through you. In giving the question, please give the name of the one proposing it. By this method information of an interesting character may be elicited and an interest awakened among the young that may result in good.

Most of the children of our schools have heathen parents, few of whom feel interested in sending them to the week-day school, and still fewer in sending them to the Sabbath School. They need your prayers. We labor in hope, feeling assured that we shall reap if we faint not. Believe me, yours faithfully and gratefully,
K. J. GRANT.

San Fernando, Trinidad, Sept. 5th, 1878.

FREEMASONRY AND CHRISTIANITY.

"The corner-stone of a fine new church was laid at St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 18th June, with Masonic honours. The Provincial Grand Master, A. M. McKay, opened the proceedings. Prayer was then offered by the Rev. M. Harvey, the Grand Chaplain. The stone having been pronounced 'truly and correctly laid,' Rev. Dr. Muir, of Edinburgh delivered a suitable address, after which the Rev. J. D. Patterson closed the proceedings."—"Record" for August.

I cannot see the slightest degree of the fitness of things in Masonic ceremonies at the laying of the corner-stone of a building to be devoted to Christian worship. The Grand Orient Lodge of France denies the being of God. I am happy to find that it is otherwise with British Freemasonry. But even in its best form, Freemasonry knows no difference between Jehovah, Allah, and Brahma—no difference between Christianity, Judaism, Mahometanism, and Paganism. It utterly ignores the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. If we believe the Bible, we must believe that our prayers are acceptable to God, only by Jesus Christ. No Freemason can, however, as a Freemason, pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ. We have, therefore, no reason whatever, to believe that God hears Masonic prayers. The God of Freemasonry is merely the God of nature. I am far from saying that there are no truths in Freemasonry. I maintain, however, that as it is a system which knows