

FOOTPRINTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN PIONEERS.

BY H. S. M'COLLUM, ST. CATHARINES.

One of the truest of American poets thus wrote of the pioneers of agriculture and commerce—the men who felled the forests, lived in rude cabins and voluntarily suffered hardship and privations, that the wilderness might blossom as the rose, and the hunting grounds of painted savages be made to wave with ripened grain to feed the teeming peoples of the world:—

“ Our hardy pioneers, the men who, nursed
Amid the blooming fields of cultured lands,
Forsook the scenes of infancy, and first,
With hearts of lofty daring and strong hand,
Pierced old primeval groves, by hunter bands
And beasts of carnage tenanted a one,
Deserve the bard's high lay, the sculptor's proudest stone.”

How much more worthy of, at least, historic commemoration are they, who, at the call of their Divine Master, left home and kindred and culture and congenial associations, to carry the gospel of salvation to scattered forest homes, and to plant the banner of the cross amid the waving branches of primeval woods! It certainly cannot be an unpleasant task for the readers of the YEAR BOOK to trace together some of the footprints of some of the pioneers of Christianity and Presbyterianism in this loved and favored land. Of all Upper Canada, in no section were such footprints earlier seen than on

THE NIAGARA PENINSULA,

and no section has a more interesting or more honorable Pioneer Presbyterian history. Here, within five miles of the Falls, the congregation of Stamford was gathered for public worship as early as 1785, and here, before the beginning of the present century, the Presbyterian settlers—mostly United Empire Loyalists—had erected numerous comfortable, but comparatively rude, houses for public worship, in which, in the absence of the living preacher, they gathered, from Sabbath to Sabbath, for prayer and praise, and for the catechetical instruction of their children. Here, among Presbyterian Churches, were held some of the earliest revival meetings in Canada, and here, during several years, was witnessed an almost continuous out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the organization of numerous congregations, and the “gathering in” of many, who, in their respective spheres, have honored their profession, and faithfully served the Master. Not a few of the elders composing the sessions of existing churches, and several pastors and missionaries now in active work, date the commencement of their Christian experience from those “times of refreshing” which preceded the McKenzie rebellion, and which, for almost Pentecostal power, have scarcely been equalled even under the