

Our Contributors.

GOOD-BYE TO THE NORTHERN PLAYGROUND.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Last week we parted at Windermere, a popular resort on the eastern side of Lake Rosseau, a few miles from Port Carling. Now let us get aboard the steamer and go up to the village of Rosseau, at the head of the lake.

Every island has a summer cottage on it. That cottage to the left, on a projecting point, at which the steamer is stopping, is the handsome summer residence of Mr. E. B. Charlton, ex-mayor of Hamilton. The Hon. J. M. Gibson, Principal Grant's "typical Presbyterian," and other guests are visiting there. If you call you will be hospitably treated. Mr. Charlton is one of those men that should have been in Parliament years ago helping to give this country good government. John Charlton is such an able man that people are apt to think he has all the brains of the Charlton connection. He hasn't. The Hamilton member of the family might have made just as good a mark if he had been ambitious in a political way.

That large island to the right is owned, and at present occupied by the Penmans, of Paris. Go in there and you will be well received if you are properly introduced. The Charltons and Penmans are solid Presbyterians who can hold up their end of the ecclesiastical stick in any company. In a few minutes more you will be at Rosseau. That large hotel on the high bluff to the left is called Maplehurst. It is said to be a high toned place and certainly looks well. Now we are across the bay and tie up our steamer in front of an immense summer hotel popularly known as the Monteith House. A little to the left is the site of the celebrated Pratt's hotel, one of the first and largest summer hotels in Muskoka. It was burnt a few years ago and never rebuilt. Rosseau is a clean, smart village, and seems to be thriving. The leading store here has a stock of goods that would make some merchants at the front wonder. There is a neat little Presbyterian church and we suppose some of the other denominations are represented. The number of Presbyterian ministers who preached at Rosseau when students, would make a good-sized Synod. The number who have preached in Muskoka would easily make a General Assembly; and it wouldn't be a bad assembly either.

One of the sights at Rosseau is the Shadow River. We cannot say anything about this river as we merely sailed past its mouth. We have long since learned not to judge men by the amount of mouth they have, and we see no reason why rivers should not be treated in the same way.

Now let us go back to Port Carling at the head of Lake Joseph. Soon after leaving the Carling River the steamer turns to the left and stops at Ferndale. To the north you see most charming islands. In fact, the sail from Ferndale over to Cleveland and from there to Port Sandfield is considered by many one of the most delightful in Muskoka. The islands are well wooded, there is a highly ornamented summer residence on each, and as the steamer calls very often you have a sail that is simply glorious. The distance from Port Carling to Port Sandfield by land is only about four miles, but by steamer, when many calls are to be made, it must be ten or twelve. There is no use in trying to describe the beauty of this corner of Lake Rosseau, so we will just use the highly original phrase that it "must be seen to be appreciated."

Port Sandfield consists mainly of a large summer hotel and a cut in the narrow neck of land that separated Lake Joseph from Lake Rosseau before the white man made his appearance in this region. It is named after Sandfield McDonald who was Premier of Ontario when the union between the two lakes was consummated. Port Sandfield has always been a popular summer resort.

Now we are on Lake Joseph. That cottage to the right is the summer residence of the Rev. Dr. Dickie, of Detroit, formerly of

Berlin. A short sail brings us to Hamill's Point, where there is a large new summer hotel. Islands abound on every hand; and each has its gaily decorated cottage. That large island to the left that we are now stopping at is Yoho. The man on the wharf who takes the rope is Prof. John Campbell. He looks well and as he gives you a hearty handshake you feel glad that the Synod of Montreal and he came to a settlement. Now we are in a region inhabited mainly by Presbyterian elders. Near by is the summer residence of W. B. McMurrich, Q.C., an elder; a little farther on is the summer home of Mr. James Watson, of Hamilton, also an elder, and a little further still the island of Mr. Justice McLennan, an elder in St. Andrew's West. Nature has been so lavish in beautifying these islands that none but Presbyterians seem fit to live on them! To the right you may see Stanley House, a most delightful spot for a tired man to rest in. A few minutes' sail brings us to Port Cockburn at the head of Lake Joseph. Here there is a large and popular summer hotel, which is always well patronized. The view from the front is grand and if you wish you may sit on the rock and gaze out on the lake; but we must say good-bye.

We do not pretend to have mentioned one tenth of the places at which a tourist may have rest and recreation on this northern playground. There is a nice little side trip from Port Carling to Bala, but we were never fortunate enough to take it. There are nice resting places away back from three principal lakes at Huntsville; Burke's Falls, and we know not how many other points. The sail down the Magnetawan River from Burke's Falls to Ahmic Harbour is said to be grand. Brother Simpson, ex-editor of the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, has a cave somewhere near Huntsville, in which he makes "copy" and enjoys his briar root. May he live a thousand years, if he wants to!

Homeward bound, once again to face the uncertainties of the future and begin life's battle anew. Whittier's lines are often recalled, as one after another of the islands is passed:

"I know not where His islands lie
Their fringed palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

A STRONG CONGREGATION.

REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., F.H.D., CALT.

Every congregation has its own distinctive character: and it has that, in virtue of its being an organic whole. It has a life peculiarly its own, and an influence going forth from it in keeping with its character. Some congregations are distinguished by their missionary spirit, others by their evangelistic zeal, others by their intelligence, others by their prayerful spirit, others by their coldness, or pride or exclusiveness or other undesirable characteristics. And according to the prevailing spirit of the congregation it is known among men. It has a light that shines, and a life that tells upon the community in which it is planted whether it will or not. It is not a close corporation living only to itself. Like the individual man it does not, and cannot live to itself, it must of necessity affect others lying outside of and beyond itself.

St. Leonard's, of Perth, was in the time of John Milne a centre of blessing. Often when one was distributing tracts, or dealing earnestly with another in reference to spiritual things, he would be greeted with the remark, "You'll be from St. Leonard's." In this way the evangelistic zeal of that congregation was recognized.

Park Street Church that called the late C. H. Spurgeon to the work of the pastorate was a praying church. He tells us himself that they were "mighty in prayer." Nor did they lose this character. Lately I fell into conversation with one of his students, and he told me, that one day when a number of the college boys were enjoying themselves on the lawn in front of Mr. Spurgeon's home, some of them gathered about him and made bold to ask him this question: "Will you tell us, Mr. Spurgeon, what, apart from your own personality, you consider the secret of your success?"

Mr. Spurgeon answered, "I regard the prayer meeting in the college from seven till eleven every Sabbath morning as the secret of my success." To this prayer meeting people came, presented their desires and left, staying only a short time. Yet it was kept going on from seven till eleven every Lord's Day. And that was only one manifestation of the spirit of prayer in this great and influential congregation!

Perhaps we do not think of our congregational character as we should do. It is an outstanding fact, however, that every body of Christian people has marked features, that distinguish them and set them off from all others. And ought not every congregation to be a strong congregation? Let me point out what I consider as necessary to that. By "strong," I do not mean strong in numbers merely, nor strong in wealth merely, nor strong in intellect merely, all these are most valuable elements in congregational life. Yet these may all obtain, and the congregation be for all Christian purposes weak. By "strong" I mean strong in Christian principle and Christian life and Christian activity. Strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus! What is necessary to that?

1. That it be built upon Christ as the sacrifice for sin. Christ as the sin-bearer and the sinner's substitute. Christ as the one foundation of the sinner's hope. Christ as the life of the soul. Christ as the companion and Saviour for life. Christ as the hope of glory. Christ as all and in all. Christ alone is the sure foundation.

2. That the minister be a man of God. A man thoroughly devoted to the work of God in the saving of men. A man of faith and prayer and consecration. A man who, like Paul, serves God with his spirit in the gospel of His Son. A man who believes the word of God with the entire force of his spiritual being and accepts the whole of it. Who does not pick and choose, and is in large and frequent doubt as to this part or that part being God's word. Such an one is double-minded, and so unstable. Little can be expected of him in the preaching of the Word. He will handle it in a gingerly fashion, void of the sure confidence that carries conviction. His unsettledness will communicate itself to others. He will be like one lighting a fire on the prairie, which soon leaps out beyond his control, involving many in ruin. A firm and unfaltering faith in God's word is the fundamental force in a preacher. Having this, he will faithfully and fearlessly proclaim the whole truth. He will seek prayerfully to expound it with wisdom, enforce it with earnestness, apply it with love, and illustrate it by consistency. He will rest wholly on the power of the Holy Ghost to make the word live in the souls of men. His eye will be lifted to the Lord that he may work with him, "confirming the word with signs following." In God alone will be his help. Like the holy George Herbert, he will learn that "praying is the end of preaching." After John Purves, of Jedburgh, and Andrew A. Bonar, had filled a Sabbath day with earnest proclamation of the truth, Mr. Purves remarked in the evening: "Now we must go to the yet greater part of our day's work, namely, prayer."

3. That the congregation obey the word of God. "The obedience of faith" is what is needed in a congregation that would be strong. The minister to a large extent determines the character of a congregation. His life and conduct and preaching will affect mightily those who listen to him with respect, or who regard him highly in love for Christ's sake.

John Milne impressed on St. Leonard's Perth, the features it bore; Spurgeon deepened in Park St., London, the spirit of prayer; Dr. Whyte, of Edinburgh, has set an intellectual stamp on Free St. George's, Edinburgh. Dr. Matheson has formed St. Bernard's, Edinburgh, to the appreciation of poetic imagination and philosophic insight; Dr. John Hood Wilson, of the Barclay Church, Edinburgh, has created a missionary fervour, and a zeal for Christian work, in the hearts of that grand congregation.

And so it is, that the character of the minister leaves its deep and broad mark upon the people. Now, suppose that the people under the faithful guidance of the men of God, recognize distinctly:

1. The absolute need of the Holy Spirit.
2. The place of prayer in reference to all the affairs of life. And 3. Zeal in doing good as the result of faith and prayer and the inworking of God—then they will grow daily into the possession of greater strength. Where there is on the part of a congregation a clear view of this fact, that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," there will be no selfish resting in blessings received as though they were only given to the individual to be enjoyed, rather than to be distributed.

They will then seek to discover "every man his work." They will know that they are not to be idlers—far less sick people that need to be nursed. They will understand that they are healed and saved, and being healed they should seek out the diseased and bring them to the great Physician, and being saved they should endeavor to rescue the perishing. Andrew first findeth his own brother, Simon. Philip findeth Nathanael. The woman of Samaria went her way into the city and saith to the men, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" These incidents give us the direction in which the Spirit of God leads a man out. He does not become self-centred and self-satisfied. Rather, he is set free from self and led to think of others. He is carried into service for Christ. He feels himself bound under new obligations. And in obeying the new motive force of the Spirit he grows in grace; grows strong. And as he singly does so, so is the congregation to do as a body. Here lies the great secret of a strong congregation; all obedient to the heavenly voice. Through this experience it is brought in time to realize that its joy and power is in doing good to others, in working for the salvation of others. And thereby its faith grows, its love, its patience, its perseverance, in a word, all its graces flourish. They have given them room to grow, and opportunity to show their excellency. When a congregation as a body of believing men and women, has brought home to them the thought that they are associated together not for merely social ends, nor merely for purposes of mutual edification, nor merely for devotional exercises, but rather that they may more efficiently carry on Christ's work of saving lost souls, it shall speedily rise up into possession of a strength that will amaze many. Then under holy impulses, will money and intellect and numbers find an important office to fill. Every gift as well as every grace God has given will then come into beautiful exercise, and in the lives of real workers do infinitely more than in other conditions. Then "means" will be offered with the life; "intellect" with the life; "numbers" with the life; the whole congregation will be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." Such a congregation instead of needing help from without to build it up, will not only "edify itself in love," but will be able to help others also. A strong congregation is simply a band of working Christians, inspired by faith in God, relying on the Holy Spirit and zealous in doing what God enjoins them to do.

THE FRASER RIVER FLOOD.

BY REV. E. D. MCLAREN B.D.

The sympathetic interest awakened in all parts of the Dominion by the reports of the calamity that has befallen the settlers in the Fraser River valley, was very fully and gratefully appreciated by the people of British Columbia.

Our brethren in the East, who were so prompt and generous in their offers of assistance, will no doubt be interested in a short account of the causes and effects of the inundation, together with a brief reference to the probability of its recurrence.

The conditions that rendered the flood possible were, an extraordinarily heavy snowfall in the mountains during the winter months and a remarkably cold spring, followed by unusually and uninterruptedly warm weather in the month of May. The backwardness of the spring may be inferred from the fact that, on the 15th of May there were