

During the trip, fourteen stations were visited; seventeen meetings were held on week days, and at twelve points divine service was held on Sabbath and the sacraments administered. We had the pleasure of meeting six of the student missionaries in their respective fields, and heard good reports of their work.

It is desirable that the importance of the Muskoka and Parry Sound districts, as a field of missionary work for our Church, should be better known. The general opinion may be that it is poor and unpromising but this journey has led me to a quite different impression. Those who visit as summer tourists, or who are acquainted only with the most frequented routes of travel, can scarcely attain correct impressions in this matter. There is, without doubt, a prosperous future for the district. The census shows already a population of more than 27,000, a great increase over the former number. There are many rocky ridges traversing the country, it is true, but there are a fertile soil, a favourable climate, and scenic influences not found in the Scottish Highlands, for the uprearing of a hardy and thrifty population. We did not hear any discontent expressed by the settlers regarding their prospects, but we did hear that there are former residents of Manitoba who prefer Muskoka. In several townships, settled for only three years, we saw much good land and several large clearings with good crops. Out of many instances, I will mention but one place on high land on the west side of Stony Lake, in township of Strong, commanding a fine view. Here Mr. Findlay's services were in requisition to unite a pair in marriage, and we were informed that a young man had sold his claim and improvements on 200 acres for \$1,000 (a deed cannot be given until there are five years of settlement), and his father was offered by parties from Hamilton \$2,000 for the same consideration on a lot of the same extent. On the South River, which empties into Lake Nipissing, there will be some fine farms, level and free from stone as in the "front." I may add that we came through one of the older parts, which, about six years ago, appeared to me an unpromising settlement, but now presents a finely improved aspect, the fields being free of stumps and well tilled. Here, I was told, the settlers are comfortable. So much as regards the prospects of the country. We have between fifty and sixty missions there already, more or less regularly supplied with Gospel ordinances by our missionaries. Few of them are strong, or able as yet to contribute money for the support of the Gospel. They have to bear the difficulties incidental to all new settlements, and have had frequent losses by summer frosts. The great difficulty now is the want of markets for disposal of their surplus produce. When lumber camps are located in their neighbourhood they can sell, but all have not this advantage, and some have to do what they can in trading the surplus off at country stores. The great need of the district is railway communication, which it is hoped they will soon enjoy. As a mission field, Muskoka has laboured under great disadvantages, in its being isolated. The stations are not, as in the case of other Presbyteries, in the neighbourhood of settled charges and under the eye of members of Presbytery. Also that the supply of missionary service is intermitted for the most part during the winter months. If the work is to prosper, it seems absolutely necessary that more liberal grants be given from the Home Mission funds for the settlement of ordained missionaries, and that catechists be found who may be able and willing to labour during winter.

There are some incidents of the tour which may be mentioned. At Nipissing we had a few days for recreation, and were most handsomely helped in this matter by Mr. McKenzie, formerly of Teeswater. Mr. McKenzie placed his large boat, tent, and himself, at our disposal for two or three days, sailing in the lake and fishing among its numerous islands. He also furnished largely of the supplies for the excursion, and refused to receive any compensation which we desired him to take. To Mrs. McKenzie and the daughters also, we owe thanks for kind attention, as well as to Mrs. Beatty for hospitality. We had also the pleasure of two days' sail on the new steamer "Inter-Ocean," on the first day from Nipissing to South-East Bay, and thence to Surgeon River, on the north-west shore of the lake. The day and the scenery were most enjoyable. Could I picture the sail up the Surgeon River from the delta at its mouth to the landing place, three miles distant, your readers would be delighted. As the steamer approaches the landing place the river bays out, and you lose sight of the

course until you discover on the left and right angle with the vessel's length, the river pouring through a narrow gorge in the rocky ledge. Above this outlet, at a distance of less than a mile, are fine chutes on either side of an island which divides the river. Mr. Holdritch resides here, and keeps a store, there being but one other white family on the river. We were kindly entertained here, and held service in the house at close of the day. Over a dozen persons were present, two of them Messrs. Davidson and Smith, of Angus, and one an Indian. There was a special interest in this occasion, as we understood it to be the first Protestant service ever held on the north shore of Lake Nipissing. It was on Tuesday, 23rd August, and not on Sunday, as stated recently by a correspondent of the "Globe." Next day, at seven a.m., we embarked on the steamer for the return. The morning was foggy and the smoke dense. It was the first of the smoky days which have continued till the date of this writing. We were much indebted to Captain Burrit for his courtesy and kindness on the steamer.

On the way back from Nipissing, we saw fire frequently in the woods, and witnessed some of the distress it caused. On Friday, the 26th, we drove twelve miles from Commanda to Mr. McVittie's house on the Parry Sound road, for the purpose of holding service. On arrival, we found that the barn with crops and implements had been burned. This lent a sad interest to the service, and incited us to impart such consolation as we could.

At Maganetawan we worshipped with a considerable congregation on Sabbaths 14th and 28th, and administered the Lord's supper on the former day. I was informed that a considerable number, half perhaps, of the communicants were members of the Methodist Church. It was evidence of cordiality between the members of the two Churches. If similar cordiality could be arrived at by mission boards of these Churches, the mission field might be wrought with less friction, with greater economy on both sides, and with advantage for promotion of the true religion in the district.

I wish to state my impression as to the value of the services of Mr. Findlay as superintendent of missions in the district. Their value has been long known to the members of Presbytery. I was with him over but a part of the field under his care, but I have had a view of the difficulties he has to meet, and the labours required of him, involving long absence from home. It is work which not many would undertake, and for which many, though willing, would not be duly qualified. But I forbear; it is not yet time to write his epitaph.

One little item may interest the editor of the Assembly's organ, as shewing it to have other kinds of usefulness than he may yet have learned. In one place where we were very kindly entertained, we found our sleeping apartment decorated in ceiling and walls with the pages of the "Record." After having no doubt served their primary purpose, they were pasted carefully in due order, so that the margins were in line with each other, and the effect was an agreeable check pattern of wall-paper.

I have mentioned the names of a few persons to whom we were indebted, but it is due to others to say that all the way through we met with kindness from members of our Church too numerous to mention separately; and we beg them, one and all, should they see these lines, to accept our most cordial thanks.

NOTES ABOUT THE NORTH-WEST.—
SUPERINTENDENT OF MISSIONS.

BY THE REV. GEORGE BRUCE, B.A., ST. CATHARINES.

It has been my fortune lately to spend a few weeks in the North-West as it is called—a term vague enough to indicate the vastness of the country, and the indefiniteness of our conceptions of it. During that time I was present, with Rev. Dr. Cochrane, at the installation of Rev. Mr. Robertson to the office of Superintendent of Missions in Manitoba and the North-West. You have already given an account of that very important event, and of the local interest—I mean the interest in the city of Winnipeg—which was manifested on that occasion. It is my purpose to give you, in a few words, an expression of the interest aroused in a wider field by the same event, because it is of importance for the Church to know how the action of the Assembly is received by those in whose interest immediately the appointment was made. I left Winnipeg after the installation of Mr.

Robertson, and through the kindness of the Rev. Mr. Bell of Portage la Prairie, I was enabled to visit a large number of the missionaries, and to travel over a wide range of country, in a comparatively short space of time. We drove from forty to sixty miles each day. Altogether the weather and roads were so exceptionally fine, that the experience was delightful to me, at least, who having no responsibility in finding or keeping the trail, had simply to watch the opening up, as we drove along day after day, of these wonderful vistas, to the tuneful cadence of the horses' feet drumming on the well-beaten trail—a pleasing and often sleep provoking music, when roads and winds and balmy sunlight gently conspire to produce agreeable sensations within you; sensations which do not become less pleasing from the presence of an underlying consciousness of what these same elements can become at other seasons and in altered circumstances. The recollection tempts me to let my pen run loose in some description of the impressions which these great solemn plains, these lonely plains, these ceaseless, fitful, lawless, weird winds of the prairie, and a thousand other things, make upon the mind of a stranger; but I must go on with my subject. I am thankful to have had a chance of seeing our missionaries on the plains, their homes, and the nature of their work. No description can make the same impression on the mind as seeing and hearing in such things. Among many things worthy of note, one was impressed upon our minds over and over again—the number of the settlers who are Presbyterians. One is at a loss to account for this. The proportions must sometime vary, and other parts of the field may be, and no doubt are, different in this, but in those hundreds of miles that we travelled over it became amusing to note how frequently one could discover in the staid solidity of manner, and even in the outline of the form and the expression of the face, the unspoken but positive assertion, "I am a Presbyterian;" and generally this fact was stated in words in the course of a few sentences of conversation about the circumstances of the settlement. I do not think there were any magnetico-ecclesiastical currents running across the prairies turning our horses and ourselves towards the homes of our denominational affinities, and I hope and believe we were not led by feelings so unworthy of our Church, and so out of sympathy with the country, as to be looking for Presbyterians alone, or in a spirit which would have caused us to rejoice the less in the presence of others. And, on the other hand, these confidences of the people were not specially sought for, and it is not my impression that there was anything of the Presbyter about us to invite them. It is simply this, the presence of Presbyterians in the North-West in very large numbers in proportion to the population, is a fact, and a fact which is full of meaning to our Church.

In regard to the appointment, however, we found a universal and profound satisfaction with the action of the Assembly—satisfaction with the creation of the office, and satisfaction with the appointment of Mr. Robertson to the office. Missionaries and people have felt for years that the work was being seriously hindered for want of a Superintendent. It was utterly impossible for the Presbytery of Manitoba to manage the field; the idea would have been ridiculous but for the serious issues involved. Greater still was the absurdity of the idea that the Home Mission Committee, meeting twice a year, could direct and oversee the work. It is a marvel that the work has been done as it has been done. Much credit is due to the missionaries for their self-denying and earnest and wise labours, and to the ministers of the Presbytery of Manitoba, who have sacrificed their health at times in their efforts to keep abreast of the surprising growth of the field. Now the question will soon be, how much it is possible for even the Superintendent to overtake in such a field. However, there will be now organization wise and vigorous. Congregations will be arranged with a view to the future. The labours of missionaries will be directed to advantage, and the financial strength of the fields will be developed far more efficiently than ever before. Mission fields will take much more rapid steps towards independence and organization, a result which will tell powerfully, not only on the financial view of the case, but as well on the spirit of the congregations. With such an assurance as to the increased efficiency of the work, the Church should put forth every effort to keep pace with the great work. The increase for a few years will be extra-