



Algoma in England.

[CONTINUED.]

No. 4.

Sir—Having reported the results of my interviews with the Committees of the several Missionary Societies distinctively connected with the Church of England, let me say a word in behalf of two other organizations, whose names are known the wide world over, wherever the name of Christ has been heard, and even to the earliest foundations of his kingdom laid. I am aware, of course, that in some quarters the 'undenominational' character of these societies, excludes them from recognition, nay, even debars them from admission to that shadowy region of the 'uncovenanted' to which the heathen are to be made welcome; but none the less do I feel it my bounden duty not only to make public acknowledgement of my personal obligations to these societies, but with great humility, to express it as my private opinion that, when the great day comes, which is to try every man's work, and every Church's too, it may possibly be found that, among the instrumentalities that have been most signally blessed in hastening the world's evangelization, none will receive a richer benediction than just such agencies as these; that, putting altogether aside all questions of mere external ecclesiastical organizations as not included within their sphere of duty, have set themselves to the simpler and more grateful task of diffusing, through their several channels, the essential saving truth, as it "in Jesus."

In naming the "Religious Tract Society" in this connexion, I wish to give your readers the benefit of my own observation as to the method of work pursued by the committee, more especially in the matter of publication.

For one thing, it combines the 'utile' and the 'dulce' very happily. The members meet every Tuesday morning at 8 o'clock, and after refreshing the inner man with a plain but substantial breakfast, proceed to the more serious business of the day. In its due order, the question of publication of tracts, &c., comes up. For this stage the way has already been paved by the manuscripts being printed, and a copy furnished to every member for private, careful perusal. The chairman, gavel in hand; then calls on each to give his opinion on the claims of the particular document under consideration, whether as to literary merit or theological soundness. The fire of criticism runs round the entire table; the critics numbering sometimes twenty-five or thirty. In this way, faults, whether of mistiness, or verbosity, or defectiveness of teaching are brought out, which would otherwise escape notice. Sometimes the manuscript is referred back to the writer for amendment, in other cases it goes direct to a silent body known as the "Publication Committee"; for such action at their judgment, aided by the suggestions already made, may deem advisable. One result, of course, of such an ordeal must necessarily be, that anything savouring of any particular "ism," is eliminated, while all that remains becomes "colorless," as it is termed. This, to some, is a great calamity. Well, perhaps, so it is, but query, what "color" should that teaching be which sets forth Christ, "the light of the world?" Let it be ever shown that the publications of this Society anywhere contravene any one of the fundamental facts of christianity, as they are embodied in the apostle's creed, "to preach any other 'Gospel' than that we have preached" and no clergyman of the Church of England,

be he as 'low' as he may, can any longer defend it, till then, let us thank God for the millions of little paper preachers it annually scatters broadcast over the earth, carrying with them, as they do, simple but sufficing statements of New Testament truth, such as we cannot but believe will, in many a case, arrest the eye, and awaken the conscience, and so "accomplish that which God pleases." Even though there be no living voice at hand to interpret and enforce the message.

With regard to my personal connexion with the society, it was limited to a simple interview on the morning of the 5th of February and an application similar to that made elsewhere. The committee responded most readily by voting a grant of £50 worth of tracts, and other religious literature of various kinds. Just here I desire to make special mention of the courtesy of the Rev. Lewis B. White, the secretary who charged himself with the task of selecting the material best suited to my purpose and of forwarding it to Canada free of all charges. Of the value of such a grant only those can form an adequate estimate who have travelled through the remote and now sparsely settled parts of this country, and see how completely destitute the people are, not only of secular reading matter,—the weekly newspaper is the only luxury indulged in—but still more of all literature of a good moral, and religious tone, such as might in some little degree alleviate the loss and injury caused by the infrequency, some times the almost total absence of opportunities for public instruction and worship.

Closely connected, however, with the necessity for supplying religious literature to the settlers, there was another and very urgent want of a similar kind, in another direction, for which