

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### LETTER FROM MANITOBA.

MR. EDITOR,—Having returned from a three weeks' trip down the line of the Canada Pacific Railway, it occurs to me that it may be interesting to many of your readers to know something of the prospects of that enterprise with which the future prosperity of this province, and indeed of the whole Dominion, is so wrapped up.

Your readers will not have forgotten the glowing account given by the esteemed pastor of Knox Church, Winnipeg, of his short run into the same quarter last autumn. My being sent on a mission to the "navvies" is the first fruit of Mr. Robertson's visit, but I earnestly wish that it may be only the beginning of a good work in this needy field.

The Home Mission Committee of the Presbytery of Manitoba, having exhausted all their efforts at inducing some young man from the east to come and occupy this sphere, at length determined to send one of their own number to take possession of the field immediately. Being one of the nearest to Winnipeg I was selected to go, as it was thought the professors of the College could fill my place in my absence more readily than one of the remote stations. The call was a sudden one but I felt it to be strong, and resolved that if Mrs. Campbell was not afraid to be left for three or four weeks on the lonely prairie, I should at once set out. Her consent being obtained, I started for Winnipeg, reaching there on Tuesday. Wednesday was taken up with getting information about the route and the work, and a pass from Mr. Whitehead, the obliging contractor of the section in question.

About half past two on Thursday morning I stole quietly away from the College, looking very much like a tramp with my budget and inevitable fur coat, notwithstanding it was raining, and Winnipeg mud was already getting deep. I struggled down towards the

#### BANKS OF THE RED RIVER,

losing my way and having to climb out of somebody's farmyard to reach the ice, clambering down the steep banks on a dilapidated fence. Cautiously I wended my way down the river looking for the starting point of the train. Let me here remind readers in the east, that the Peabina Branch is built on the east, or St. Boniface side of the river. Completely done out with the tramp, owing to the darkness, the heat, the load of clothes and the rarified air, I reached the train just in the nick of time.

I threw my bundle and myself down on the first flat I came to, trusting to time to recover my lost breath. Having at length gained the "caboose," I found it jammed full of men and provisions (not cooked however). I was fain to be content to squat down behind the door with my valise for a seat and my coat for a rug. I am not very sure whether I got any sleep or not, at all events I felt very "seedy" when at daylight the train stopped at "Brokenhead," to give the bite a drink. It was not easy to get enough out of the frozen stream to satisfy the maw of the iron steed; at last we steamed up and with all on board started on east, reaching the end of the track, in the midst of a dreary swamp, about ten o'clock. This was about forty miles east of Selkirk, or "the crossing" as it is usually called, and sixty-four miles from Winnipeg.

We looked in vain for the teams that were supposed to be always waiting, which were to convey us directly to "fifteen." After looking round for a considerable time to see if there were any chance for breakfast (vain hope), I at length found Mr. Sinclair, the contractor for sending supplies on to "fifteen," who took charge of my valise, promising to send it forward the first chance. Mr. Rouleau, the faithful colporteur of the Bible society, was my *compagnon de voyage* for the most part of my stay. With my coat on my shoulder I set out to work my passage east. The sandwiches, due to the kind thoughtfulness of Mrs. Bryce, now came in handy. After a tramp of three or four miles we reached Shelley Station, where Mr. Milloy, lately employed on the survey, and his family still reside. Almost faint from fatigue I was refreshed with a "cup of cold water" from Mrs. Milloy. My star was surely now on the ascendant, for Mr. Robinson, a sub-contractor on section fourteen, was just starting for the Whitemouth, some ten or twelve miles farther down the line. There was no sleighing except in the ditches, yet this "good Samaritan" gave me his seat in the cutter, and trudged through the mud him-

self. If I had not been completely exhausted I would not have trespassed so far on his good nature. He proved to me "the friend in need, and so the friend in deed," and I shall ever hold him in grateful remembrance, for I feel sure it was done "for His sake."

Reaching Whitemouth River about two o'clock, I became the guest of Mr. Molesworth, C.E., and his blooming young bride; staying over till the morning, I held a meeting in the camp of Major Bowles, who is a sub-contractor for culverts on section fourteen. I had here as everywhere on the route an attentive audience, of about twenty-five persons.

Next morning Mr. Molesworth completed his kindness as host by sending me forward

#### WITH HIS CUTTER TO RIDOUT'S,

twelve miles further on. Refreshed with a good night's rest I enjoyed this ride with Mr. Gordon, assistant engineer, and brother of the late Adam Gordon of Port Perry. After dining at Ridout's, a stopping-place, I set forward in company with Dr. Hanson who was going down to Cross Lake to dress the wounded hand of some man who was hurt there. I rather enjoyed the eight miles walk to Rennie Station, where I enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Blanshard for the night.

It is plain that the air on the Canada Pacific Railway is deeply infected with the matrimonial fever, as Mr. Blanshard is the fifth engineer who has led a willing victim to Hymen's altar within a short time. Let the gentlemen at Ingolf beware. The fever is spreading "all along the line." "*Palman qui meruit ferat*" say I.

Next morning (Friday), Mr. Blanshard sent me on with his horse as far as Telford, ten miles, where I found a team going to Cross Lake. Most of the teams I saw after this were mules, because they are hardier and can put up with the scarcity of hay that is felt there, and more the farther east we get. At Telford I had only time to call for a few minutes on Mr. Forrest and Mr. Steele (son of Mr. Steele of Amherst Island, Mr. Forrest's assistant), promising to stay a night with them on my return, which I did. I reached Ingolf on Friday evening. My expectation of meeting Mr. Charles Whitehead here was disappointed, but I showed my letter from Mr. Robertson to Mr. Farrell, "walking boss" of the west end of section fifteen. He bade me welcome to such entertainment as he could afford in camp. After supper I walked across the bay to call on Mr. Rodger, the engineer, who insisted on my taking up my quarters with him and Mr. Morrison, of Toronto, his assistant.

I was too weary to have any service that evening, but on Saturday evening I made my first effort on fifteen in camp number two, two miles from Farrell's headquarters. In Mr. Volume, storekeeper, I found a zealous helper in all my work here. He accompanied me on my expeditions to camps two and four. My first reception was rather discouraging. In fact there was a feeling that I was too soon after another missionary who had left just two days before me. He came from Fort Francis, making a hurried trip along the twenty-seven miles of fifteen; a priest from Winnipeg had preceded him by a few days, and it is said that he banked \$500 as the net proceeds of his trip. I don't know how much my immediate predecessor got, but evidently an impression was left on the minds of many amongst the men that "another preacher" had come for a haul. I was deeply grieved with this feeling, and was hampered with it during my stay. However, after the first service in each place I had an opportunity of doing away with this impression to a certain extent as no "collection was taken up to cover expenses."

On Sabbath I had two services, one in camp number one at two o'clock, and one in camp number four in the evening. In the afternoon I had thirty or forty present, and in the evening nearly as many, most of whom were French Canadians. I had rather a startling reception, but after I commenced service I never had a more attentive audience. I trust some good resulted from the service. Sabbath desecration and profanity and loose talk are the crying sins of railway men, and of men on all public works. It is difficult for one unacquainted with the scene to understand how constantly my feelings were crucified by the taking in vain of the name of God and the Saviour. Not that the men on fifteen are worse than others similarly employed. The profanity was worse, if possible, in the caboose of the train going out.

On Monday Mr. Rouleau and I

#### STARTED TO WALK TO LAKE DECEPTION,

fifteen miles. We had dinner at camp number three, only three miles from Ingolf. Soon we were out of reach of the sound of the drill and hammer. All the drilling is here done in the old-fashioned style with two men striking, and one holding and turning the drill. Drilling machines were discarded, owing to their not being heavy enough for the kind of Rock, I believe. Called at Mrs. Armstrong's, nine miles down, to rest a few minutes, and get a drink of water. The country for the whole length of fifteen is just lakes and granite rocks covered with stunted pine and poplar. The portages are generally shorter than the lakes. One can't help admiring the pluck of the engineer who located this part of the line. Rough and bare as the region is, it was very homelike to me, reminding me strongly of scenes on the Upper Ottawa so lately left behind. After a few months living on the everlasting pancake, as one has termed the prairie, a rock covered with green is a most refreshing sight. But it would be a poor choice for a farmer to locate on either fourteen or fifteen. In the one it is swamp and "muskeg," which is a worse swamp, and in the other lakes and rocks. I don't think that enough soil could be gathered on the whole line of fifteen to make a good ten acre lot. Plenty of scenery there is though, and picnicking grounds innumerable. I was almost longing to be there in summer time, but I must not be envious of the young man who is to spend the summer months amidst these lakes and rocks and woods with two canoe men to paddle him along over the lakes, and to carry the canoe over the portages. Let not all the young men from the colleges speak at once when the question is asked, "Who will go and work in this vineyard?" Many of the men here are from quiet respectable homes, and eagerly welcome the gospel sound which reminds them of dear ones at home, and keeps their memory of sacred things fresh. I cannot conceive of a more interesting field to an earnest soul, who has resources at command, than going in with the glad tidings to these neglected ones. Deeply grieved do we all feel here the want of a missionary spirit in the churches at home since this field has been so long unfilled, notwithstanding the earnest pleadings of the Board here.

Even the usual stumbling block of expense cannot be pleaded here, since if the right man for such work can be got no difficulty will be felt, Mr. Whitehead asserts from knowledge, in raising \$100 per month, and no expenses. If none of our young men from college offers for this field I shall begin to feel ashamed of our Church. But this is not the only field that remains to be taken up. Does the Church in the east not yet know what kind of treatment the Professors of our College are receiving. They are being murdered by inches by doing two men's work each. This is no exaggeration. Neither of them is scarcely a Sabbath at home, and that means a drive of twenty to fifty miles and preaching twice, and then at it again on Monday with their classes till Friday evening. Add to this all the extra meetings of a public kind at which we have to be represented, and you may begin to see that they cannot stand this kind of thing much longer. Does the Church in the older province remember anything of her struggles thirty to fifty years ago? Have they forgotten

#### THE VALUABLE ASSISTANCE

they got in men and means from the home Churches? Surely they have forgotten or they would be more ready to come to the help of the Lord in this new province where yet there is much struggling for the bare necessities of life amongst our farmers. No sleighing has meant no opportunity to haul wood or grain to market with oxen, which is the kind of team most of them still use.

Deeply do I feel, and every missionary here feels, the need of a great revival of interest in the cause here, amongst the churches at home. I have gone into this matter at too great length for your space, I fear, but far too briefly considering the importance of the topic. In conclusion, I would just say that rapid progress is being made with the rock work on fifteen, and that on my return I rode seventy-five miles by train, ten or fifteen more than when I went out. I spent a week at each of the three headquarters on fifteen. I preached in all the camps but three, preaching twenty times in all, sometimes to small knots of ten or fifteen, and sometimes to twenty-five to forty. What is needed, however, to accomplish much, is for a man to stay with them, to gain their confidence and