

Our Contributors.

THE TOWN ON THE STRAIT.—III.

BY BERTRAM HEYWOOD.

The inhabitants of Pictown (as the Town on the Strait may be called), or at least the male portion of them, labour under a profound impression that the affairs of our great Dominion would speedily be reduced to a chaotic condition were they not to bestow upon politics their closest attention. Whether it be a peculiarity of the Celtic nature that the science of government has for its special attractions, the writer is not certain. There can, however, be no question that in Canada a large proportion of the highest offices of State are held by Gaels and Gauls. Now, every citizen of our old-fashioned town keenly realizes the fact that, in the possession of a vote lie dormant great possibilities, and these he is not prepared to throw lightly away. Further, as a voter he forgets not that he is one of the—at election times—sovereign people, and he is careful to let those who anxiously seek his favour see that he knows it, and so there ensues on his part much shrewd playing for private profit, and anxious study of public questions. In this he receives valuable assistance from the party organs of the district. These are two in number, the one flying the *Standard* of the great N.P., the other being the *Advocate* of Reciprocity. By the dwellers in the more remote country districts, especially up in the Duketown Hills, the editors of these journals are popularly supposed to have a stand-up fight whenever they meet, and their strife is constantly imitated by their rural subscribers. To be sure the fervency of the party journalists is not supposed to be altogether disinterested, but in this it only resembles the more the zeal of a considerable number of highly respected persons everywhere.

In matters political there is one radical difference between Pictown and other communities. The latter exhibit a fierce interest in politics only during the crisis time of a general election, whereas, in the former, such a feeling prevails all the time. Whenever and whenever a few men meet together, politics form the one unvarying theme for discussion. Even into the business interests of the place politics intrude. In other towns not far distant when it is a question of inducing new industries to locate there, the rule is.

"Let Whig an' Tory a' agree."

Here, however, a different law prevails, and one reason why there are so few enterprises of any extent at work in the old town is because political *antimus* prevented the men of wealth in the place combining. It may seem an exaggeration, yet it is true that the party leaders in the place will try to prevent a man of an opposite political creed getting a contract that would bring employment to not a few families. Such a short-sighted policy can have only one result, viz., the decrease of trade and population, and the increase of poverty. Such intense political feeling as we have spoken of is characteristic of the whole district in which the Town on the Strait is situated. It is fostered by "heelers" and has prevailed for many years. It has even entered into the churches, and the term "Kirkman" is very nearly synonymous with "Tory," and that of "Antiberger" with "Grit." In fact, about forty years ago such names were the regular designations of the parties.

The leading politicians of the town have carefully encouraged the notion that church morality and political morality are two entirely different things. A man is not the less esteemed because he is exemplary in the discharge of religious duties, e.g., going to church, Sunday School teaching, etc., and in politics trying all he can, by hook and by crook, to make the most out of it. The church and politics are two entirely separate fields of action and the same code of morals is not meant for both. By two facts the old town is flattered into believing that its in-

fluence in politics is a paramount one. One is that a member of the Senate is always a resident and the other that the M. P. for the country is a Cabinet minister. This gentleman is a wonderful illustration of the adage, "Nothing succeeds like success." The initial letters of his degrees and honors very nearly embrace the alphabet. To the cause he represents (a cause whose merits we are not discussing), the town is kept faithful by the judicious, yet crafty, endeavors of these individuals. As a general election approaches, rumours that a new wharf, or drill shed, or something else is to be constructed become rife and allure the voter to cast his suffrage for the "right man." The more stubborn are attended to by personage whom we will call "crooked," and whose financial dealings at such times are often on a large scale. After the election is over hopes of the government doing anything for the town vanish into thin air. To such an extent has this deluding system been carried that instead of "hustling" to advance its interests in a business like way the place exists in hope of Government patronage. Repeated disappointments occasionally rouse a storm of anger and then something is done. Thus a promise of a new post office held out to the town for some four elections is beginning to take form. A site for it has been bought, the cellar dug, and in about ten years time it is believed the roof will be on it. Meanwhile the party paper prints a very nice engraving of the "new post office as it will appear when completed" about every three months.

Now and again a deputation of farmers gets a free excursion (wines included) to the Northwest ostensibly to report on the suitability of the country there for agriculture, but in reality as a small return for their loyalty to the party. Employment for their younger sons is also provided on the government railway and steamboats after their fitness for such positions has been duly certified to head-quarters by the local committee composed entirely of grocers, tailors and lumbermen.

But we fear we have neither time nor space to tell, nor our readers the patience to read about many other interesting features of the political atmosphere of Pictown and the surrounding district. We might briefly say that it is a Scott Act town, and that about the time of the municipal elections the candidates all pose as ardent temperance reformers and advocate prosecution of all liquor sellers. During the rest of the year about sixteen illegal bar-rooms are permitted to do pretty much as they choose. The clergy are the only ones who try to close them up.

But this is the worst that can be told about the old town. Its many excellencies and the virtues of the great majority of its citizens more than counterbalance its failings. Indeed many places in the Dominion have all its faults and only a few of its virtues.

That the day of prosperity, of liberation from party thralldom, and of progress may soon return to it is the wish of all who know it and who look back to its homes, its schools, and its churches with sincere regard and who count the influences they lived under whilst they dwelt there the sweetest and best in their life.

(Concluded.)

CANDIDATES FOR FOREIGN MISSION WORK.

BY A NORTH-WEST MISSIONARY.

The following letter from one of our Home Missionaries, laboring in the Northwest, we commend to the careful consideration of our readers. Coming as it does from one of our Home Missionaries, we may assume that there is no want of sympathy with that great work, nor want of information as to the actual conditions in the North-west, yet he says that we are practically keeping up with the North-west work, just because the Home Mission Committee is doing what we have maintained the F.M.C. should do.—[Ed.]

I trust that the Church will respond in

such a way, both with money and advice, that the Foreign Mission Committee, can with unanimity recommend the sending out of every man who in their judgment would be an approved workman.

I do not believe the question of money ought to hinder us as a Church from sending out, into the Foreign field, every good man we can get hold of. There is plenty of money in the Canadian Presbyterian Church. I believe if we throw the responsibility on her, she will not throw it off; if we trust her, I believe she will respond to the trust. I don't believe the Presbyterian Church, will ever quietly look on and see the mission workers suffering for the necessaries to keep them in form for efficient service; much less do I believe that the Lord of the Harvest would call over from India, China, etc., for workmen and then refuse to maintain them when he got them there. A man's support in the Foreign field is just as certain as his call to the Foreign field. If the Church believes that God is putting it into the hearts of certain men to go to Foreign work, she may just as reasonably believe that God will put it into the hearts of others of His servants to support them when there. If any part of the work is God's, it is all His. To me it seems not so much a question of the support of men in the work, as, first of all: does God speak to us as a Church, asking us now and without conditions to send more men into the mission fields we as a Church have undertaken to evangelize? Would sending the men as they offer themselves force the Church any sooner to a sense of her responsibilities? Is the comparatively small force in the field a reason for the small contributions to the foreign work? I know there is a deficit. Does that mean that we have been going too fast? I don't think any one would say that. Is it intended to suggest that a change of policy would be beneficial? It might be. Perhaps we have been keeping too near the shore in the shallows, when all the time the command intended for us was "Launch out into the deep." I know that as a Church we are peculiarly situated, having such a vast Home Mission work. This at any cost must not be neglected. I think, however, we might say that even now we are supplying every district with men and the means of grace irrespective of where the money is to come from, or how. "In 1881, in all the West just 2 congregations, in 1894, 52 congregations, gain 400 per cent," and the money has always been forthcoming. So that I almost think that if we were to send to the Foreign Field all qualified men who offer themselves we would simply be following the policy in regard to Foreign Missions which practically is now being followed in Home Mission work.

I trust that the F. M. C. and the Church as a whole may be "filled with a knowledge of His will" in this matter.

MURMURS FROM THE MISSION FIELD.

BY T. B. STEWART.

Much is being written in your columns on the subject of supply to our mission stations in the West. Those of us who know somewhat of the needs will not blame the Superintendent even if he may have used strong language when addressing the students. Much has been written of the hardships connected with the work—too much perhaps. The experiences of "Student" in a late issue are very rare indeed. Mission work in the West is no sinecure, of course. Who expects it to be? Who wants it to be? Those who expect to earn a living easily had better keep out of the ministry. But if we, who are old, find mission work, bracing, invigorating and attractive, young men have nothing to fear.

But my object in writing this was to call your attention to hardships of another kind; hardships peculiar to lay catechists, the men who stay in the field. Students may have a rough shake up now and then, but it is only for six months or a year at most, when

they retire into the lap of *Alma Mater* and the privileges of city life. Instead of this let them suppose that we are moved to another field and imagine the horrors of house hunting. After spending all our spare time for six weeks, perhaps we are forced to accept a suspicious looking building six or eight miles away from our work and thankful for that. Then let him think of plastering, repairing, white-washing, cleaning, building necessary additions, moving family and fixings some twenty or thirty miles, all without missing a service of any kind, and without entering on the bug business, he would have his practical knowledge considerably increased. Students who can silently fold up their tent and as silently steal away know nothing of such matters. But I do not complain of this, it seems a necessary consequence of occupying a new country.

I do not complain either of the work or the pay. The Home Mission Committee are doing all they have the means to do and doing their work wisely and well. My two complaints are of another character and whether you think fit to notice my introduction or not, I hope you will allow me room to express them through the Presbyterian press, because (and that is my first grievance) we catechists, have no other means of reaching the higher courts of the Church. We have no voice or vote either in congregation, Presbytery or Synod, and yet are expected to attend each at our own expense. Some of us, who have enjoyed this privilege for many years in the past, feel a decided hardship to sit like stone monuments in a church court, straining our ears to catch the whispering monotone of modern practice, and may not say *Speak out*. Very few elders attend either Presbytery or Synod in the West. In other words the clerical influence is predominant and although we all had votes there would be no danger of over-balancing Will Dr. Laing, so prominently connected with church law, or Dr. McVicar, so prominent as the elders friend, or some other member of Assembly, inimate proceedings whereby some status may be accorded us in the inferior courts of the Church while under obligation to attend them.

But to be brief, there is yet a more serious hardship that we have to endure, one that could be remedied by legislation, but one that is not experienced by students or ordained missionaries. "We never have the privilege of sitting down at the Lord's table." Speaking for myself, this is my fourth winter in Manitoba, and only once have I enjoyed this privilege, and that was accidental. I arranged the communion in our congregation, to take place during the visit of my son-in-law from Ontario, who supplied in my place, thus allowing me to enjoy this precious ordinance along with my family and people, a blessed breathing spell that I look back to with gratitude. Usually, of course, when the Moderator of session is dispensing the ordinance in the catechist's field, he takes his place. Many a time on such occasions has the writer sympathized with the Psalmist when he said: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" When I remembered these things I pour out my soul in me, for I had gone with the multitude. I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise. With such thoughts crowding in upon him, as he enters the village church, thoughts of his own field and the dear ones sitting in the banqueting house, thoughts of past communion seasons and their precious associations, need it be wondered at if the Catechist makes a very poor substitute for the educated and eloquent gentleman whose place he is expected to fill? According to our constitution as a Church we have no hope of enjoying this privilege, until we are called up higher, where, thank God, no imperfect legislation shall debar the humblest saint from the Father's Table.

But there is another thought. Besides feelings, there is the question of fitness. I submit that we are not so well qualified for our