

THE FUTURE OF THE WEST.

By Rev. Dr. Robertson.

Because of its extent and resources, Western Canada is sure to play a more important part in Canadian affairs in the future than in the past. It is estimated that the country is capable of supporting a population of from 25,000,000 to 50,000,000 in ease and comfort.

Population in the Maritime Provinces is stationary; the population of Quebec and Ontario is increasing at the rate of about one per cent. per annum; that of Manitoba and the country westward increased about 130 per cent. between 1881 and 1891; and it is confidently maintained that 800,000 people will be found in the West when the next census is taken; and that in 1905 the West will have overtaken the Maritime Provinces.

The shifting of the centre of population westward means the shifting of the political and commercial centre. The press, public men and business men are preparing for the change; the Church must do the same, if she is not to be left hopelessly behind.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States (North) has undertaken no new home mission work for three years. It reduced its staff during that time from 1,750 to 1,416, and ceased to employ students during the summer as formerly. Other Churches in that country have, in a similar way, seriously shortened their cords.

This neglect of the West, in the Republic, has brought about the decay of true religion. In large sections of the country, lynching, murder, gambling, divorce, drinking and lewdness are sapping the foundations of social order.

Similar conditions and forces will produce similar results in Canada. In some districts these sins have shown their head already, and every effort should be made to remove them root and branch. It is pleasing to observe that the Gospel everywhere has proved itself to be the power of God to save. In some districts where tact and determination were needed to secure a foothold we have now self-sustaining congregations.

Last year 9,700 settlers passed through Winnipeg to take up land in Manitoba and the North-West. This year, during January, February, and March alone over 10,000 passed through, not to speak of 2,500 Canadians who were on their way to the Klondike. The prospects are that Manitoba and the Territories will get an accession of 20,000 or 25,000 people this year. About one-half of the incomers are English-speaking, from Eastern Canada, the Motherland, or the United States; the others are foreigners from Northern and Central Europe.

The exhaustion of free grant lands in the United States, the restrictions placed on immigration, and the war now waged between the United States and Spain will likely divide the stream of emigration from Europe,

and send a much larger proportion of it to the shores of Canada.

The Teutons, Slavs and Scandinavians are, generally speaking, of good physique, industrious, law-abiding, and promise to become good settlers; but strenuous and sustained efforts must be put forth to assimilate and Christianize them, if trouble is to be avoided in the future. The dangers of the Republic to the south, by leaving large masses of population unassimilated, should prove a warning to Canada.

A LONG AND HOPEFUL FIELD.

I spent some days recently on the field occupied by Rev. Mr. Pelletier, lying along the main line of the C. P. R., from Sudbury, 300 miles, west to White River. This is a most interesting field, not because of the great results which appear on the surface, but rather because it is the seed-time of what we hope and expect will be an abundant harvest in the near future.

Mr. Pelletier is engaged partly under the H. M. Committee and partly under the Board of French Evangelization. The people among whom he labors are, therefore, partly English-speaking and partly French.

The kinds of people to be met with in this long distance vary very much. There are the railroad officials and the men in the service under them, the Hudson Bay factor and his men, the lumberman and those under him in the woods or in the mill. Like the Missionary, most of them are on the go all the time, moving about in the discharge of duty, but falling in with the services held by your Missionary in the lumber camp or mill, in the railroad village or gravel-pit, as the case may be.

One thing that impressed me very strongly during my necessarily hurried run over the field was the heartiness with which he is received by all classes of the community. Many of the Roman Catholic settlers in the field evidently look upon him as their friend, while all classes among the Protestants are equally hearty in welcoming him in his rounds among them. A heaven is at work which will surely tell in the near future, let us hope, in bringing many out of darkness into the light of truth. Many instances of this might be given, which go to prove that his labors, carried on quietly, have been blessed to many a home and many a heart in this field. Others are earnestly seeking after the truth, reading the Word and enquiring as to its meaning.

Financially, the results on the field may not be striking, but this is only one side of the question, and, after all, the least important. Changes are taking place in the settlements along the line which cannot but benefit our cause. Patience and perseverance are necessary meantime, and in the end we will have reason for thankfulness. "We shall reap if we faint not."—Rev. Allan Findlay.