

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### MISSION WORK IN MANITOBA.

MR. EDITOR,—The interest felt in the North-West and the work of the Church here is my only apology for sending you a few lines regarding the field to which I have been recently appointed by the Presbytery of Manitoba. I do not promise anything sensational or beyond the mere commonplace. But, after all, is not life made up chiefly of the commonplace?—hence it should not be to us without its own interest, and then it will help to illustrate the way in which matters move here.

The field to which I was designated is "Portage West and Burnside." Burnside is a preaching station five or six miles west of Portage, and has a Presbyterian population of some twenty-two families. It is a comparatively old settlement for this country. All the land has long ago been taken up, and most of it is under cultivation. The majority of the Presbyterians are of Highland Scotch descent, but came here from Ontario. For agricultural purposes the district is fully occupied; indeed several of the families are already moving farther west, where they can get more land for their sons. Some have already gone, and others are about to go soon; among the latter is one of the two remaining elders of the congregation, Mr. Sutherland, whose absence he felt as a loss to the cause here. No growth, therefore, can be expected from Burnside except what may result from pastoral work and Sabbath services.

The other station (that is to be) is "Portage West, to which more interest is supposed to attach. Portage-la-Prairie, be it known, has, like many other towns, an east and a west, a little over a mile apart, and which in times gone by were virtually separate villages. The east is the town at present, and contains the court-house, post-office, town-hall, churches, and nearly all the business. The west is on the Hudson's Bay Company's reserve, and contains their store and two others, and twenty-five to thirty dwellings such as are usually found in the country. The town lot "boom" enfolded both in its wide embrace, and extends westwards fully a mile and a half beyond. Portage has been prosperous during the last eighteen months—one of the places, indeed, where the "boom" has been greatest—and it looks forward to a large and substantial prosperity in the future. It is in many respects favourably situated for this. It has a good location, generally healthy, good water, a fair supply of wood for fuel, and its people are considered as intelligent and energetic. Its visions of future greatness are bold and bright; to picture them I would not attempt. Whether they shall be realized or not, time will tell. Altogether, Portage may fairly be called the "Ambitious City" of this Province.

With regard to Church matters, which are more pertinent to the present purpose, your readers are no doubt aware of the fact that a new Presbyterian church, seated to hold between four and five hundred, was opened here about six months ago. No doubt they have also heard more than once that it was immediately filled to overflowing. So marked was this at the time, that it was under consideration to sell the new church and to build a more commodious one. This was not, however, carried into effect, but, owing to various causes that may not be here mentioned, it was proposed by some instead to build a second congregation. It was supposed that if the town continued to grow as it was then doing another would soon be required—in the west end of the town at any rate. There were avowedly other reasons for this besides the glory of God and the good of souls. There are many town lots to be sold in the west end, and to be occupied. The people of Portage would have reached a state of moral elevation bordering on the sublime in this country, and in these speculating and land grabbing times, had they thought only of the common good, and been indifferent to their sectional and individual interests. But they have not attained to so high an elevation; they are men of like passions with their fellows, and fully possessed by the spirit of the time and place in which they live. Hence sectional jealousy, personal rivalries, and all the *et ceteras* belonging to the circumstances are in full and active operation among them.

Regarding the prospects of the cause at West Portage, I cannot venture an opinion. I am confidently told that a second church will be built—one that will

be worthy of the place and of its promoters—and that a minister will be called in due time, and I have no reason whatever to doubt that when the "due time" comes it will be done. In the meantime I can only speak of things as I find them, and as they at present are. On the Saturday of my arrival I found that Sabbath evening services had been held at West Portage during the winter and spring, but from various causes they came to nothing, and no one in the place expected that they were to be immediately resumed. There were no arrangements whatever made for continuing them, and no place of meeting was to be had. I announced a service in the open air for next evening, preaching at Burnside in the forenoon. The meeting was held, and a few attended, and at the close a small provisional committee was appointed of gentlemen most interested in the movement, and best acquainted with the place, with whom to consult. Mr. T. A. Garland kindly granted the use of an unfinished store on Saskatchewan Avenue, in which to hold the services, till it should be required for other purposes, and here the Sabbath evening meeting has since been held. In the meantime I visited the district, and met and consulted with the committee before referred to, the result of which may be stated as follows: There are in Portage West some four Presbyterian families, and five single individuals, permanent residents, and these are mostly members of the congregation already established, and see no reason why they should separate from it to form another. There are also three or four families of transients, some members of which "should belong" to the Presbyterian Church, but they will move west in a few weeks. As for the Church already established, of which the Rev. A. Bell is pastor, I have the best authority for saying that it is quite able to accommodate all who come at present. At and for a few weeks after its opening it was often crowded to overflowing; but these were the weeks of town lot excitement, and there were many strangers in the place, who did not intend to remain, and many, no doubt, were drawn by curiosity to the new church. But the excitement abated, and the speculators passed away, and the overflow ceased. It will not be wondered at if, in these circumstances, the friends with whom I consulted, though favourable to the project, at once and unanimously pronounced the attempt to form a second congregation here premature. At present it is not needed for any part of the population as a means of grace. Unless the people begin again to come into Portage in large numbers it will not be needed for some time, and till then it cannot be expected to succeed, or if it should succeed it will be at the expense of the other congregation. To what extent and how rapidly Portage may grow in the future, time will tell. Points farther west are attracting more attention at present. The immediate prospects of the field are therefore uncertain, and I do not feel my own connection with it to be either a desirable or permanent one; but perhaps the matter will be differently arranged when the Presbytery here meets again.

Portage-la-Prairie, June, 1882. J. ANDERSON.

### UNFAITHFUL ELDERS.

MR. EDITOR,—We have faithful elders, and, in their place, there is nothing so beautiful and blessed. We have faithful ministers, and they are among heaven's most bounteous gifts to a sinful race. We have ministers and elders of another character, and they constitute a power for evil which it would be hard to find equalled. They have such controlling connection with the highest interests of religion and morality, that their influence, sure in every testing case to be on the wrong side, is more destructively effective than that of the most pronounced enemy who fights against Christ without the cover of hypocrisy. Unfortunately, ministers and elders of these opposite characters may be associated—a circumstance which must, sooner or later, produce collision whose violence will bear proportion to the decisiveness of character and effectiveness of action of the party faithful to the Master.

There are lamentable cases ever recurring from this cause, in which faithful ministers are mauled and persecuted without mercy or compunction. At the same time, the cause of Christ, who is the prime object of enmity, suffers in its vital interests, and His people, through their regard for Him and His cause and His servants, and for the spiritual good accruing through their instrumentality, feel wounded and bitterly aggrieved. Strife, division, desolation, are the result.

These things are not fancy, but oft-repeated fact; and the magnitude of the evil cannot be calculated. Such facts are a natural result. We have, say, a minister who is faithful and earnest, and some or all of his elders, backed by a good proportion of people like-minded with them, who will not put their finger to any work belonging to them as spiritual office bearers. They will not take part in a prayer meeting or Sabbath school; they will not pray with the afflicted, or warn and counsel the erring. They may have a keen relish for financing, for pre-eminence, for intrigue; but as to anything implying spiritual exercise, or holy desire, or solicitude for the perishing, their sympathies are repugnant. The more earnest their minister is for the spiritual life of his people, the more decisive is their dislike of him—a dislike which rapidly grows into malignity—a malignity which leaves no stone unturned for his ruin. His character, his health, his usefulness, are nothing to them, except to be crushed. The cause of Christ is nothing to them, except it be to bolster up their importance and their credit. For the gaining of their design in such a case, no resort is too wicked except it be dangerous to self-interest.

Perhaps you will say, your representations are too severe. Nay, they are not too severe, and cannot be, where applicable; and we have seen their applicability too often. Such cases are not made known in print so often as they occur. The principal sufferer suffers usually in silence. And there is a Higher, who keeps silence with the intention to speak out in due time. The voice of His providence is often heard in frightful visitations upon those who fear not to touch the ark and lay hand upon His anointed.

Unfaithful elders in any Church are a standing menace to its peace and prosperity. They will attribute non-prosperity to any cause but the right one. They will lay all upon the shoulder of the faithful minister, and fan up every breeze raised against him. They will cry, "Not satisfied, not satisfied," carefully avoiding the cause of dissatisfaction, which lies in hearts at enmity with the truth and duty urged upon them—urged by one who loves them too well to hold back any of the counsel of God. They will say, the young people don't like the minister and are not coming in, and then aid the devil in raising hue-and-cry from every throat. Meanwhile these elders, and the class to which they belong, allow the young people to grow up in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, untaught and uncontrolled at home. In them nature has its own way, and in nothing are they so decided as in their repugnance to all serious piety and to those who most seriously serve its cause.

In a congregation where such elements are strong, what is to be expected? If it be blessed with a faithful minister, of necessity there will be ever-recurring agitations, strifes, and disaster. If it be cursed with an unfaithful minister—a dumb dog that can neither bark nor bite—there may be peace, the peace of death.

Well, what is to be done? Do tell us something, Mr. Editor, or get some of our wise and good men to look at this matter. It is evident that such men as we have been talking of ought to be kept out of the eldership—and the Church, if possible. They will creep or crawl in if they can; but the Church doors are under keeping, and the keepers should look well at their "keys." If ministers are unfaithful in this matter, they prepare a whip for their own backs, or for the backs of better men, as often results. Should not our Church and all Churches set up a standard and combine against the invasion, so dangerous, of the world? Such elders of course ought to resign an office whose duties they disregard, and to whose spirit they do despise—and this in common honesty and self-respect. If they were to show a like disregard of honesty in any secular society, such society would soon discover some effective method of relief. What action would you recommend in the Church? Is the Church, of all societies, to tolerate humbug and hypocrisy, to its own disgrace and damage?

N. M.

### ORDAINED MISSIONARIES.

MR. EDITOR,—Who employs ordained missionaries? It will be at once answered, the Presbyteries. It is true that the Presbyteries appoint them, and pay a large proportion (sometimes more than one half) of the salary, but it is another power that controls them. What or where that power may be is not so easily defined. It is sometimes said to be the congregation; but mission fields are rarely organized in such a way as to merit the names of congregations. It is gene-