

Our Contributors.

SOLID WORK ON THE MAIN LINE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Christmas comes but once a year and a good many people not by any means pessimists think that is often enough. There are a few feather-heads, no doubt, who would like to have a Christmas all the year round, but these feather-heads are usually people who eat and drink and dance in other people's houses and at other people's expense. House-keepers who began to prepare for Christmas a fortnight before the day came, who did a great deal of work and spent a good deal of money in getting ready for the holidays, are, as a rule, quite satisfied with one Christmas in a year. One is better than two for all sensible people. The summer holidays will make another break in the year's work, and these with Easter, and the Queen's birthday, and Dominion day, and the civic holiday and Thanksgiving day furnish about enough of holiday for any man who has a sound mind in a sound body. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, but all play and no work would make him an idiot.

Municipal elections, like Christmas, come only once a year and those who have most to do with them will think that is often enough. Possibly there were a few people in Ontario last Monday evening who thought once was once too often. Of course we must have local government, but once in a twelve-month is quite enough to have the turmoil and excitement, and perhaps bad blood, that always attend the exercise of the franchise. There are a few fools in every community who are never so happy as when an election of some kind is going on. They mount the wave and for a time are conspicuous. They speak loud in the corner grocery and have a better audience than in a quiet time. They have a good excuse for leaving home in the evenings. There are also a few knaves in every municipality who contrive to make an honest penny out of their votes or in some other equally honest way. These two classes love elections, and would like to see the excitement kept up all the year round. They are never happy except when the community is in a turmoil. If they ever think of heaven it is as a place where there is a perpetual general election going on. Good citizens are always glad when any excitement is over and business and social life get back to their regular channels.

Christmas and the elections are over. What next? Solid work say we. And there is much lasting pleasure for a healthy mind in solid work. Of course Christmas enjoyment is very nice—for one or two days. It is pleasant to see the members of the family come home and help to eat the Christmas turkey, pleasant to receive and give a few handsome Christmas boxes, pleasant to meet friends, pleasant to have an opportunity to help the poor and do kind deeds to our neighbours—all that is pleasant and good—but it is too good to last long in a world like ours. We cannot long help others unless we work and help ourselves. Our ability to help others depends largely on our ability to help ourselves. The fellows who sigh for Christmas all the year round never help any good cause very much. Their efforts are mainly directed to bringing up their mustachios and parting their hair in the middle. The people who do most to make Christmas happy are the people who work the hardest during the rest of the year. If there were no such people Christmas would not be worth having.

Those of us who have to work should be profoundly thankful that work may be made a source of pleasure. After all nothing brings as much lasting pleasure as duty well-discharged. The discharge of even an unpleasant duty often brings the most exquisite pleasure. There are few more pitiable sights than an idle man trying to enjoy himself. An idle woman's effort is not much better. The sensation a man has when he knows he has done a good, honest day's work is about as pleasant as any sensation he ever has. Tired he may be but the fatigue that comes from a successful day's work is sweet compared with the languor of idleness.

Much is said in these days about the evil effects of over-work—especially over-work of the brain. Men are sometimes said to have overtaxed their brains who never were seriously suspected of having any brains to over-tax. For one man in any calling that wears out ten must rust out. If a proper equilibrium is kept up between mental exertion and physical exercise it is almost impossible to over-work a healthy brain. The brain is the toughest organ in the human body. Worry often destroys the brain and the nervous system but worry and work are entirely different things.

Work to be of any permanent value and to bring any lasting pleasure must be done along the main line of duty. There are many side-tracks on which one is often tempted to go off, but side-track work should be carefully watched lest it injure the operations on the main line.

A lawyer's main line work is law. His side-track work is politics.

A merchant's main-line work is to sell goods. His side-track work is to speculate a little, take a seat in the council and various matters of that kind.

A minister's main line work is to preach and attend to pastoral visitations. His side-track work is to go to conferences, conventions, church courts, anti-Jesuit meetings, committees, tea-meetings and various other meetings. One of the most frequent mistakes ministers make is to give so much attention to side-track operations that they get thrown off the main line. The very people who invite you to go on the side-track will be the first to complain if your main-line duties are neglected. They run you off both tracks for doing what they asked you to do.

PASTORAL LETTER.

The following Pastoral Letter has been issued by Rev. Principal Grant, D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly : *To the Ministers and Members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada :*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN. The General Assembly asked me to issue a pastoral letter for the purpose of presenting to you the claims of our Home and Foreign Missions, and of entreating your prayerful consideration to a condition of things that should weigh heavily on the heart of the Church.

THANKSGIVING.

First of all, let me ask you to join in giving thanks to God for all that He has done for us as a re-united Church. Fifteen years ago many thought it unwise to unite four Churches, separated by causes grave enough to have warranted divisions in former days, and extending over vast provinces sparsely peopled and not then connected by rail. The result has vindicated the policy of union as well as the polity of our Church. Free intercourse between brethren long estranged has dissipated suspicions and created mutual confidence. A General Assembly represents all Canada and different sides of thought and feeling, discusses questions on their merits, and decides them on the common ground of reason and conscience. It listens to any minority that can urge its views with Christian temper, or to any individual who may be dissatisfied with the judgment of the lower courts. The membership of the Church has well nigh doubled. So has its revenue. Contributions to educational, benevolent and missionary objects have increased in much greater proportion. Our patriotism has deepened, and we have drawn nearer to sister Churches. For these blessings—above all for the increase of brotherly love and trust, for the quickening of the higher life in us, and the wider outlook we enjoy,—let us thank God and take courage.

DUTIES.

The Church has many duties to discharge to mankind. It touches life at every point from the cradle to the grave. Its aim is to sanctify the family and all social relations. Neither the municipality nor the parliament is common and unclean. In the ideal community, holiness to the Lord will be written on school and college, on trade and commerce, on mines and manufactures, on everything where man labours and learns, where habits are formed and character is developed. The Church is missionary from its very constitution. As the body of Christ it carries on His beneficent work upon earth. As the depository of the faith, it has a Gospel for the race. As an association for common worship and the edification of its members, it cultivates spiritual life, and the essence of that life is love. As an army for the conversion of the world it is always militant. As a type of the kingdom of God, it must ever seek the extension of its borders and its own purification. Like every living thing, it must grow, and no limits are assigned to its development save the ends of the earth and humanity regenerated. Like the sun, nothing should be hid from the heat thereof. The Church has always been missionary, but each age has a work of its own to do. What is our work?

THE FOREIGN FIELD.

Never was the world so open as now. Never did any flag fly on every sea like the red-cross flag. It speaks peace to two hundred and fifty millions of civilized men in Asia. To every nation and tribe it represents that individual liberty and civil righteousness which our fathers learned from Holy Scripture and tested in the school of life. Blind must he be who sees no indication of the will of God in these signs of the times. The Church is called upon to enter at an open door wide as the world. We have not been wholly disobedient to the call. Devoted men and women have gone from us to the South Sea Islands, to Trinidad and Demerara, to the teeming millions of India and China, and to the decaying aboriginal tribes of our own land. These missionaries are doing our work for us on the well-understood modern principle of division of labour. They are our agents and representatives. Considering the difficulties they have to encounter, and that we and they have to learn by mistakes and failures, wonderful results have been accomplished. This is not the place to give details but every one who can should read the report of the Foreign Mission Committee. Every minister should master them and give the substance to his congregation on the Lord's Day, so that none of our people would be without an intelligent comprehension of what is attempted and what is done in our six foreign fields. But it is not out of place to say that I know personally almost every one of those missionaries, and—speaking with great joy of heart and with sincerity as in God's sight—I testify that they are worthy the fullest confidence of the Church. Nowhere is there a body of men more animated by the spirit of the Master. If we desert them, we shall be deserted.

THE HOME FIELD: AUGMENTATION AND HOME MISSIONS.

The world is open to every Church. But what Church has a Home Field like ours? And what place is so sacred as home? Here I must not speak of all the departments of Christian activity that bless the land, and that taken together constitute a mighty river, compared with which our agencies for the conversion of heathendom are but a tiny rill. I confine myself to that one to which the General Assembly has directed attention, in its two forms—the augmentation of stipends where congregations are too poor to give \$750 a year for the support of ordained ministers, and the formation and care

of mission stations where the people are too scattered to be organized into regular pastoral charges. It is difficult to say which of those two objects is the more important. Together they constitute our one indispensable work as a Church, on the successful prosecution of which everything else depends. With regard to the first, I may state that since October, 1883, when it was commenced in the western section of the Church, a hundred and fifty-eight supplemented charges have become self-sustaining. Is any other argument needed to prove that the Scheme has been worked well, and that it stimulates self-help? At the present moment a hundred and eighty-one charges more are aided from east to west. With regard to the second one or two facts may be mentioned. Three hundred and seven missionaries are employed; and in the North-West, within the last seven years, congregations and mission stations increased in number from 129 to 473. Some little imagination on our part is needed to appreciate the eloquence of those figures. I once heard a member of the Church, who happened to come in contact with the spiritual destitution of a remote section of the country, declaim indignantly concerning the Church's neglect of its first duty. He was almost willing to send an agent forthwith at his own expense. That gentleman represented thousands who do nothing, but who, in the circumstances, would feel as he felt. I asked him to multiply his one section by hundreds, to remember that the Church had to care for all alike, and to consider whether in the past he had done his duty to all. Brethren, I ask you to study, if you can, a concrete case, and from it learn a little of what the whole vast field means. You will then be in a position to understand what your share of the work is.

CLAIMS OF THE NORTH WEST.

I have referred to the North-west, because in that region lies our most important field for the next ten years. Without a single Presbytery at the Union, it is now ecclesiastically organized as a Synod with seven Presbyteries, including Columbia. Almost every year henceforth new Presbyteries are likely to be formed. The area in the United States for free grants available to settlers is well nigh exhausted, but the stream of immigration from the Fatherlands and the older States and Provinces will continue to flow. That living stream must find its way to the great valleys of the Saskatchewan and the Peace, and to every fertile nook and corner in the land. The destiny of Canada depends on our faithfulness at this time. What an inspiring responsibility to be cast on a Church? It should lift us high above everything petty. The Sybil is offering us her nine volumes, representing as many unborn Provinces. Each year's neglect means the irreparable loss of a volume to the Church.

THE OLDER PROVINCES.

Nor should our thoughts be confined to the North-west. In Cape Breton, in the Presbyteries of Miramichi and St. John, in Quebec, in Kingston, in Barrie and Algoma, on the Pacific, in almost every Presbytery, are families and nuclei of farmers, fishermen, miners, lumbermen, some longing for the ordinances of religion for themselves and their children, others indifferent and therefore all the more in need. These people are not paupers. They are the Church's children away out in the wilderness. They are the pioneers of our country. They contribute more per family out of their deep poverty for the maintenance of the Gospel, whenever it is faithfully presented to them, than many of our largest congregations. In the end they will be our strength. Blessed is the Church that has its quiver full of them. It will be the Church of the land. Neglect them now and what shall the harvest be? For our children, a day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

A CRISIS.

There is a special reason for this letter. It is not too much to say that we have arrived at a crisis in our work. The reserve fund of the Home Mission Committee is exhausted. The Committees of both Home and Foreign Missions are in debt—not to a large extent, but for a sufficient amount to embarrass, and to render them sadly deaf to appeals which ought not to be disregarded. We can easily meet this call of duty. God has not led us thus far to cast us off and take His Holy Spirit from us. He bids us go forward, every man keeping rank. There must be organization in every congregation. The question must be put to each member of our Church: Is not this your duty, no matter what other things you are doing or leaving undone? Penetrated with the conviction that God is with us, I commend our missionaries and the work they are doing for us, at home and abroad, to your prayers, night and morning, at the family altar, and at all other times when prayer is wont to be made.

Brethren, in the faith and fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffer the word of exhortation. I speak not of my own motive, but by instruction of the Church. God has been very good to us. Never was a people more truly blessed. He has given us a broad land full of hidden treasure, a climate that makes labour sweet, privileges for which our fathers bled, and great enlargement to preach His Gospel. What shall we render unto Him for those benefits? All that we are and all that we have. This will be our wisdom. Thus shall it be well with us. Thus only shall we enter into the rich inheritance of His grace. Otherwise our toils and our successes shall be in vain. We may heap up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, but we shall not prosper.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

G. M. GRANT, Moderator.

Kingston, Nov. 15, 1889.