

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL FIELD AND WORK OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

BY WALTER M. HOSIE, OF BRANTFORD, LATE MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE ON SABBATH SCHOOLS.

In the year 1875 four branches of the Presbyterian Church, by their superior courts, namely, - The General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, and The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Maritime Provinces, in connection with the Church of Scotland, after years of negotiation, were happily united, and became the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Leaving at that time four other small organized branches of the Presbyterian family -

1. The Presbytery of Stamford, Ontario, in connection with the United Presbyterian Church of North America, consisting of some eight ministers and six congregations.

2. The Eastern Presbytery of Nova Scotia, in connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, consisting of some twelve ministers.

3. The Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, in connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, consisting of three ministers and four congregations.

4. The Synod of Nova Scotia, in connection with the Established Church of Scotland, comprising two Presbyteries, eight ministers, and corresponding congregations; and still another branch, formed from those ministers and people who declined to enter the union, and afterwards styled, -

5. The Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland, consisting of seven ministers.

The united Church organized with a General Assembly for the whole Dominion of Canada, including the Province of Newfoundland, and was attended by all the ministers and representative elders, but the attendance was subsequently reduced to a representation of one-fourth of the whole number.

This Assembly comprises four Synods and thirty-three Presbyteries, including Manitoba, the North-West, and British Columbia, and as an indication of onward progress, Manitoba will soon have to be erected into a Synod, and at least two of the older Synods divided. The Presbyteries now number thirty-seven, being an increase of four, and a rearrangement of the Presbyteries will shortly swell their number considerably.

CONGREGATIONS.

At the time of union there were 745 organized congregations, which have steadily increased year by year until, in 1882, the number was 916.

CHURCHES AND STATIONS.

The number of churches or stations now forming ministerial charges is 1,524, to which may be added 231 mission stations or groups, making in all 1,755 places where the Word of Life is proclaimed by our ministers and missionaries.

FAMILIES.

The statistical report for 1877 gives the number of families as 56,163, and this number has steadily increased, till, in 1882, we have the number stated as 65,623, while the census of 1881 gives the entire Presbyterian population of the Dominion as 676,165.

COMMUNICANTS.

Out of the large Presbyterian population, our statistics only report, as on the communion rolls, 116,883, for the year 1882, which increased from 88,228 in 1875. This increase indicates steady progress, but only shows one communicant for every six persons, as given in the census of the Dominion.

THE FIELD.

The field is truly ready for labourers, and its territory vast and almost appalling in extent, reaching from, and including, Newfoundland in the east, to the Pacific boundary in the west, a distance of over 4,000 miles, and from the southern boundary to the arctic circle.

MINISTERS.

In 1875 we had 589 ministers, and in 1882, 697; but what are these among so many people and vast a

territory; truly the labourers are few, and we may well pray the Lord of the harvest to send us help.

SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Although Presbyterian organization is almost perfect, the Sabbath school has not yet received that attention from the Church courts which its importance demands. For the first three years no attempt was made to give the number of schools in the Church. In 1879, 369 schools are reported; in the following year only 362. In 1882, reports were received from 881. While we ought easily to have at least 2,000 schools active enough to make an annual report, and here is a splendid opportunity during the next year to more than double the number of our schools, if not in existence already, and if they are by all means let them be reported.

OFFICERS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOLARS.

In 1875 officers and teachers we find, by the congregational statistics, although not by the Sabbath school reports, numbered 7,139, which in 1881 had increased to 10,306, giving an average of about twelve to each school, and the attendance of scholars, we learn from the same source, was, in 1875, 79,204, and in 1881 the number had increased to 91,257; while the report from the schools direct only show 33,200, revealing an indifference on the part of somebody that our Church courts should look into. Taking the larger number, however, as stated in the congregational statistics, and the attendance is far below that of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, which, by their latest published statement, exceeds their number of communicants, and if we had but one from each family the number of scholars in our Sabbath schools should now be over 130,000.

Another feature worthy of note is the addition to the communion roll from the Sabbath school. Not till 1880 is any reference made to this encouraging evidence of life and work done in the Sabbath school. 426 are that year reported through the Sabbath School Committee as added to the communion roll, and in 1882, 1,428 - an encouraging increase. Another item of practical and most legitimate work of the Sabbath school is the amounts contributed to missions for the past four years. The amount stated averages \$12,000 annually. With improved organization and system this source of income would be surprisingly increased. In regard to the amount expended on Sabbath schools the report for 1882 is the first reference to that common-place item, and is given to be \$21,861, which must be far below the actual fact. The volumes in the various libraries are stated to be 173,285. Surely with live committees preach Church court, and zealous, energetic officers and teachers, we ought to have fuller and more complete reports.

And now that we are closing the first decade of our united Church's history, it is important that useful and educating statistics of this phase of Church work should be available.

In a paper published in the "Sabbath School Times" of 7th April last, by Rev. Dr. Worden, Sabbath School Secretary of the Presbyterian Board, Philadelphia, he presents the relations and position of the Sabbath school and quotes the legislation of the Church there in regard to the work. We are of course a long way behind his Church in equipment. Their Publishing Board appears to supply every needed help that can be supplied by the use of type and ink, and it is well for us that we can avail of much of their productions. If we cannot imitate them in their printing, we might at least in organization, so that in due time we could follow their good works. Many smaller denominations over there have their Sunday school secretary and editors. Have we no such power to make use of in Canada?

Our hard-working conveners from year to year in their reports have called loudly for greater attention to the Sabbath school work. By Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the Assembly itself, perhaps the adoption of some such plan as that proposed for the constitution and regulation of Sabbath school work, now under the consideration of the Assembly's Sabbath School Committee, would help to a more systematic and uniform way of working with a view to utilizing to the fullest extent this invigorating and Scripture-studying meeting of the Church, embracing, as it should, older members as well as infants.

The International Lesson Series, provided for us in advance of the Church's request, has furnished us with a Sabbath school literature and exposition that is marvellous in quantity and quality as well

as cheapness, the great want now is in regard to library books which are at present procured from endless sources, and as varied as the stars. If our seven hundred ministers and many other intelligent and efficient readers were supplied with proper forms to certify as to suitable books the present excellent list we have would soon be greatly extended; and, in the absence of a publishing house of our own, arrangements could be made with respectable houses for the supply of all named books in our approved list.

It is desirable that, as we enter upon our new decade, such arrangements and regulations may be adopted as will to the greatest extent develop this school of Christian culture in Scripture knowledge and way of salvation.

Brantford, 30th April, 1883.

THE LIQUOR QUESTION IN THE ADDED TERRITORY.

MR. EDITOR, - In order to secure your sympathy and that of your readers in behalf of the temperance people and their efforts here, I venture to trespass on your space to indicate the unfortunate position in which we feel ourselves placed.

A few years ago Manitoba was desirous of adding to her somewhat circumscribed territory, and pressed the Dominion Government to add that part of the North-West Territories lying contiguous to her western boundary, from Range 13 to Range 29. When this question was broached to the people of the aforesaid portion by the present Premier in 1880, it met with little favour from many of the settlers, chiefly on account of the change it would effect in the liquor law. Petitions numerous and well-signed were sent in stating the grounds of opposition; and to meet this objection the Dominion Government promised, and the Government of Manitoba confirmed this promise, that the proclamation which affected this union should contain a clause by which the added portion would still remain under North-West law in regard to liquor, while for all other purposes it would be subject to Manitoba jurisdiction. In 1881 the annexation took place. How have the Government of Manitoba redeemed their promises to respect our wishes in this question? While under the Dominion Government, there was machinery supplied in the Stipendiary Magistrates and the Mounted Police to carry the laws into effect; the present Government have provided no such or similar means for carrying out the expressed will of the people, nor will they even aid them in their attempt to avail themselves of the very inadequate means at their disposal. Ever since this so-called union, things have been going from bad to worse until at present we are in a state of hopeless confusion and injustice, and the licensed virtuallers ride triumphant and scores of poor wretches are filling drunkard's graves.

In Birtle, Shoal Lake, Minnedosa, Rapid City and Neepawa the North-West Act is supposed to be in force, yet liquor is openly sold and drunkards reel around the streets. And to what is this due? To nothing but the refusal of the powers that be to support the magistrates whom they appointed in the performance of their duty. Let a magistrate write to the Premier, or the present intelligent (?) head of the legal department of the Government and they will be assured that the North-West Act is in force. Let the same magistrates commit a prisoner and send him down to gaol in default of payment of his fine and he is immediately released and comes back and sets the magistrates at defiance. The consequence is that they refuse to pay their fines and sell without stint, and the temperance people are out the cost of the prosecution and commitment. And then comes the crowning act of mercy in the shape of license. And this is brought about as follows: The vendors of liquor and their satellites, and any chance honest man whom they can find of their opinion send a petition to the Government, deploring the evils of unlicensed traffic, suggesting the consequent loss of revenue and pray the said Government to stop this evil by granting so many of their faithful lieges license to rob the widow and orphan, and to put temptation in the way of the weak, and bribe the strong into silence. Brandon illustrates the action of our Government and shows which way their sympathies lie in these matters. It being the terminus of the Canada Pacific Railway, last spring it was filled with a miscellaneous floating population, one third of which never intended to become actual residents. A petition was forwarded to