

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

IN THE NORTH-WEST.

MR. EDITOR,—Through the kindness of Col. Sproat and Mr. L. Clarke, I was able to engage a teamster to drive me to Battleford. The distance is 160 miles and it took us four days. The first afternoon we drove through a belt of firs. The trees were too rough to be sawn into lumber or to be used for building in any way. The land is light and sandy. The Prince Albert people say that grasshoppers never crossed this belt and attribute their immunity from the scourge to this dark green land. As we emerged from the forest we passed over some light rolling land and then struck a fine stretch of prairie that is being fast settled. For the night we staid at Carlton, and found Mr. Garson kind and hospitable. From him I learned that the Indian band, among whom the Rev. John McKay is carrying on mission work, are doing well. Carlton is on the North Saskatchewan, about fifty miles southwest of Prince Albert. For a long time it was the yearly meeting place of the factors, chief-factors and other officers of the Hudson's Bay Co. From the Mackenzie and the Yankan in the north and the Missouri and Red River in the south; from the banks of the Kaministiquia and the Fraser; from the Rocky Mountains and the Eastern shores of Hudson's Bay, the employés of the company used to meet representatives from London, talk over the business of the preceding year and arrange for future operations. The walls of the rooms seemed redolent with the memories of the past. Here old and tried friends met after years of separation; the business of the day over, many a tale was told of hardships endured and dangers escaped. There was feasting and song and story. What was rarest and richest in the experience of each was told for the benefit of the company. To men separated from their fellows for years this was no ordinary meeting. But old times are changed, old manners gone. The glory of Carlton has departed. The meetings are no longer those of English gentlemen of the eighteenth century, but the meetings of business men in one of our city offices, and they are held at Prince Albert. It was from such a meeting that the Hon. D. A. Smith rode when he made the distance of 500 miles to Winnipeg in a little more than four days. The conveyance was a buckboard and the power relays of Hudson's Bay Co.'s horses. The gentleman was tied in his seat, and night and day over rough roads and smooth the horses flew at a pace that would have delighted the heart of Jehu. When Fort Ellice was reached Mr. Smith saw Chief-Factor Archibald McDor 'd at the foot of the hill, on which the fort is built. He said to him "Bring out your best horses and drive me to Winnipeg." "Wait till I tell my wife and get my coat." "No; the first duty of a Hudson's Bay officer is to obey." "All right sir;" and the horses were hitched; nor did they halt but to change till within the enclosure of Fort Garry. The urgency lay in Mr. Smith's desire to be at Ottawa to speak and vote in connection with the "Pacific Scandal" case.

When we awoke next morning we found that snow had fallen during the night to the depth of two or three inches. The air was not frosty, however, and we hitched and were soon on the way. Two roads offered. From Battleford the Saskatchewan flows in a southeasterly direction to the "Elbow," and from that point north-easterly past Carlton. Bend the arm, bringing the hand near the chest and you have the course of the river. Battleford is on the wrist and Carlton where the arm leaves the shoulder. To travel round the Elbow was to increase the distance thirty miles; to cross at Carlton was to run the risk of not being able to cross at Battleford. In that case the longest way round would prove the nearest way there. We went by the Elbow. The grass was burnt, and we were informed that this was the case for eighty miles. We passed over a splendid stretch of good land with here and there a clump of trees. From the "Lone Land" I had been led to believe that the Saskatchewan constituted the boundary between the prairie and the forest. It is so at Prince Albert but not west of Carlton. Major Butler has secured a million acres of very superior prairie land for an English Colonization Company in the loop north of the Elbow and between Carlton and Battleford. At noon we halted for dinner beside a swamp, and with a few small dry willows boiled our kettle. While the horses were feeding I

walked on, and ascending a hill saw a pond to the left, covered with ducks. A wily fox was stealthily approaching them through the long grass. They were quietly feeding and moving in his direction, and I have no doubt his cunning and patience were rewarded by a good dinner, but I did not wait to see the end. Beyond this high ground I picked up some bumble bees' nests, in one of which I counted twenty one cells. This I regarded as a good sign for the country. Wild bees are not numerous in the North-West, but from the abundance and variety of our flowers I see no reason why bees cultivated in Ontario should not thrive were proper care taken of them in winter.

The Elbow was reached after nightfall and the wood and spring we were told of at Carlton we could not find. We halted beside some willows and cooked supper with some dry branches collected in the dark. The snow being removed I made my bed on the lee side of a bush and slept soundly. The morning dawned clear and frosty and our road was dry. After breakfast I set off on foot to explore the Elbow. The river bottom is wide with extensive sand bars. The bank is sloping and covered with timber; the soil is light and scarcely fit for agriculture, and the prairie seamed with buffalo runs. Only a very few years ago this largest and finest of game must have roamed over these plains in massive herds to have left such trails. Of course their bones whitened the plains in every direction. The country passed over during the day was hilly and better adapted for pasture than for raising cereals. The night was spent on an open plain and supper cooked with the aid of a couple of old telegraph poles. All next day the river was near on our right and the Eagle Hills only a few miles away on our left. These approached the river as we travelled up the stream till near Battleford, we had to cross their spurs. A number of fine creeks issue from springs in the hills and flow towards the Saskatchewan. Timber of large size lines the road for a considerable distance, principally poplar. We passed several islands in the river, a considerable extent covered with timber, and from trails about the bank it was evident that these are yet the homes of no inconsiderable number of beavers. The sand bars in the Saskatchewan are in some places half a mile wide and the river meanders through them, looking from the bank an insignificant stream, though 1,000 feet wide. These bars shift and the channel is constantly changing, rendering navigation at certain seasons difficult and dangerous.

Battleford is situated near the confluence of the Battle River and the Saskatchewan. Battle River issues from Battle Lake, south of Edmonton, and after flowing east and north-east for 500 miles, falls into the Saskatchewan. For some distance before the rivers unite their beds form two sides of an acute angled triangle. The area between is considerably lower than the land on the opposite banks, but still far above high water mark. Both sides of the town plot are thus saved by these streams, constituting Battleford an ideal town site. The land immediately around Battleford is light, but at a distance of three or four miles out its character changes. Mr. Rae, Indian Inspector, drove me out along the Battle and among the Eagle Hills, and I saw large tracts of friable and fertile loam. The samples of wheat and oats shown me were very good. Vegetables grow to a large size and are of fine flavour. A better crop of potatoes than was being harvested on the Indian farm, I scarcely ever saw. The desirability of the Battleford district for farming is evidenced by the number of ex-military policemen who have chosen that spot as their home. From meteorological reports the temperature is six degrees higher than at Winnipeg, Battleford taking rank with St. Paul. The town is small in appearance because scattered. On the bottom lands of the Battle the Government and Hudson's Bay Co. erected some of these buildings—town No. 1. The barracks of the mounted police were erected on the plateau between the rivers—town No. 2. The Government House and the residences of several of the officials are on the right bank of the Battle—town No. 3. Owing to the overflowing of the river the buildings on the flats are abandoned and a new town is being erected on the right bank of the Saskatchewan, north of the barracks. This promises to be the town of the future and the rest will likely decay.

Saturday I arranged for services in the hall in the Government house, and on Sabbath morning and evening good congregations assembled. I explained to the people the mode pursued by us in conducting

mission work, and announced a meeting for Tuesday evening for organization, if necessary. There was a good attendance. I found that there were eight families and several unmarried men belonging to the Presbyterian Church in and around Battleford. They were anxious to have a minister among them, and a motion asking for partial organization was passed unanimously. A subscription list was passed round and \$460 were subscribed on the spot. Those present pledged at least \$500 should a missionary be sent. I learned that settlements are forming at one or two points about twenty miles from the town, and it was evident to me that our Church should take steps at once to procure a suitable missionary. The Roman Catholics have a missionary there, and the members of that body were erecting a commodious church. There is a minister of the Church of England, but he is instructor on the Indian Industrial Farm. The Rev. P. Stralith, of our own Church, ministered to the people of Battleford and did good service. At the expiration of his appointment no one else took his place, and so for some years this post was abandoned. There is now a prospect of growth for the settlement and action on our part should not be delayed. There is much need of a grist mill in the settlement. Mr. Oliver, late of Ingersoll, has built a saw mill on the Saskatchewan, eighteen miles up from Battleford, and lumber will be sawn there next spring. Several bands of Indians are settled about twenty miles from Battleford, among the Eagle Hills, and are fast learning how to get their living out of the soil. I took dinner with one of the families, but I dare not give details. The cattle rancho of the Messrs. Wyld, of Dundas, I visited. The location is choice and on the left bank of the Saskatchewan. Their herd comprised 250 splendid specimens of Durham grades. Many of them came from Montana and looked leggy. The Saskatchewan Herald is conducted with great ability, and is a credit to the settlement. P. G. Lawrie is editor and proprietor. Of the hospitality of the Battleford people I could scarcely speak too highly.

JAMES ROBERTSON.

HOW TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ELDERSHIP.

MR. EDITOR,—It is not my purpose in this paper to refer to the authority for the Eldership as recognized by the Presbyterian Church, nor to point out all that the office comprehends. The subject would be too extensive and exhaustive. The theme upon which I purpose writing is "How to make the Eldership more efficient;" how the elder's usefulness may be increased. It must be clear to all observers that the highest standard has not yet been attained by those who have been honoured to fill this office, but defects on every hand are apparent, arising sometimes from an improper estimate of the office and sometimes indifference as to the responsibilities which it confers. No organized body of Christians have greater reason to look for blessed results from such officials as the Church to which we belong. The early training in Catechism and Holy Scriptures and the general intelligence of our people warrant us in hoping for beneficial results, especially when a wise choice has been made and men elected to fill that honourable position on account of their piety, prudence, and intelligence. The qualifications laid down by Paul in writing to Timothy and again to Titus should be the basis unquestionably upon which a congregation should proceed to make choice of men for this office, and the influences for good wielded will be in proportion as they come up to that standard.

(a) One of the first requisites in an elder should be piety. This qualification will do much alone—all things else without this are nothing. What a reproach it is to a church to have the piety of even its humblest members questioned and doubts expressed whether they are on the Lord's side or not. But how deplorable it must be when anything of this kind appears in those who are its light bearers. "Watchmen on Zion's walls," men who should be models and are not, whose example is pernicious, whose influence is hurtful.

(b) A second qualification necessary for an elder is good judgment: this will be obvious when his duties are considered. He is an ecclesiastical ruler, a counsellor and guide—a combination that requires tact and discretion and will put to the test his best judgment. Necessarily he comes in contact with all classes of people, and it is his to encourage the feeble and faltering Christian on the one hand, and reprove and ad-