

readers in the East will doubtless enquire as to their interest in Church work and their appreciation of the services of the missionaries in their behalf. An answer may be found in the reserve from which I write. Reaching Duck Lake station on the Regina and Prince Albert branch of the C. P. R. we were met at the station by several from this reserve, which is forty miles distant. Amongst these was the old Chief Mistawasis, who is over eighty years of age, and has for ten years or more been a member of our Church. Previous to his conversion Mistawasis was a heathen war-chief and hunter, and the great enemy of the Sioux in the West. He lived in the customs of the Cree Indians, and accordingly found no objection to polygamy. On his conversion to Christianity he put away his second wife, was baptized and with his wife joined the Church. Grasping me by the hand he said, through his interpreter, "we are so glad you have come; we waited for you; we will now have church again." Arriving at the reserve, we found the family of the former missionary still in the manse. They have now moved out to their new home just outside the reserve and will still attend services here and assist in the work. Our services on Sabbath at eleven and three o'clock have had an attendance of over ninety, which is a good proportion out of a population of one hundred and sixty-eight. Since we have no bell to summon the Indians to service, and they have no means of telling time but by the sun, many of them arrive an hour before service and wait patiently till the time of opening. One is surprised to find how mistaken are the ideas held in the East in reference to these people and work amongst them. We had looked for the appearance of the blanket, but what was our pleasure to find the men seated on the right neatly clothed and clean, the women on the left in print and gingham dresses, with shawls. The unkempt appearance so common among the Indians was wholly absent here. I was fortunate in securing for my interpreter from the first, William Badger, a full Indian, son-in-law of the chief, a councillor of the tribe, and above all a Christian man, who has had that experience it is desirable to relate. Our hymns are all in Cree, and as we have them in syllabic and Roman characters no great difficulty was found in assisting in the service of song. The service of song is led by an Indian, Thomas Bird. An organ, the gift of the ladies of St. Andrews Church, Toronto, is of great assistance. Nowhere have we met with a more attentive audience than here. During the week some of them call to speak with reference to the sermon of the past Sabbath. Have visited them in their homes, which, whilst not equal to those of their fairer brethren in the East, are yet far in advance of their heathen neighbours on the adjoining reserves. Some of them have family worship in their homes and instruct their children in Bible truth.

Mrs. Nichol, assisted by Miss McKay, has started a Sabbath school for all the children, with a sewing class for the girls. The school taught by Miss McKay has an attendance of twenty. I inspect it every Friday afternoon.

May we not trust that despite the discouragements which are met with in the work we may have the prayers of all for its success, not alone in the field, but in all those parts where our missionaries are endeavouring, in the strength of the Master, to evangelize our Indian population. They are fast passing away. What is done must be done quickly.

F. O. NICHOL.

Mistawasis Reserve, Carlton.

THE SUPPLY OF OUR MISSION FIELDS.

MR. EDITOR,—The question of supplying adequately the wants of our mission fields in the newer and more sparsely-settled districts of our Dominion, and especially of preventing the extensive curtailment of the work for about six months (i.e., winter), has been largely discussed in your columns. I would fain endeavour to make a contribution to the question which may, perhaps, be helpful towards its solution.

1. Why are there so many missionaries unlicensed, or unordained, and appointed for five or six months? Answer: They are cheaper. This gives employment, i.e., patronage, to students for the summer, and they are required at their studies in the winter. Then committees and Presbyteries cast about for some make-shift supply for the winter. Now why not get ordained men here and there to serve all the year round and be rallying centres for our work and for the more transient men? The men can be had. But they are not willing to go for a few months in the winter, when no one else can be had; and refused employment in the summer. Besides, there is no assurance that such men, with families to maintain, will be paid what they are promised for their few months' work. The Home Mission will pay—if it can. There is no reliance upon the share, say one-half, which the mission field has promised. The chances are all against the missionary. He may suffer in purse and reputation by taking service for a few months. I could cite cases of this kind where one experience has led the man to decline any further service.

Corollary. Let the Home Mission Committee appoint more ordained men to serve all the year round, and let them arrange to have them paid *bona fide* from some quarter if they do the work with diligence and fidelity. Anything short of this is a farce.

2. Why start so many new points when we cannot occupy the old? We prepare fields and then other Churches take them from us because they send service in the winter when we do not. Where is the economy in this? There is

no administration—all in our case, but a simple go-as-you-please style. Let some of our college and other officials visit the fields referred to, in winter—Sudbury, Webbwood, Thessalon, Day Mills, etc., and they will come back with an understanding of the wants, difficulties, discouragements and blunders that characterize our less progressive mission fields.

3. Why do not more of our young men who have seen glimpses of mission work in summer take appointment for the winter as well when their studies are completed? They would have the benefit of their previous knowledge of the people, of the place, and of rural life generally. They would suffer less from dilatoriness or uncertainty of income. They would not have the care of families to embarrass them or the need of keeping house under circumstances which often render it difficult to find a house to keep.

The young men themselves would be best able to answer. In not a few cases congregations in the older parts want young men, and they want them cheap—one or two hundred dollars less than the former pastor received—but the young man is willing to begin amid the general comforts of life. He has a Church, perhaps a manse, and prospectively, if not actually, a wife; and the county of York is more attractive than the district of Muskoka or Nipissing. And then our mission fields in Ontario are manned, so far as they are manned at all, by some of the oldest men in the service of the Church. All honour to them! Their colour and their self-denial are beyond all praise. But why are there so few young men associated with them as ordained missionaries? There is no reason worthy of a Christian missionary, unless it be that they have no faith in the administration, or the want of administration.

4. Why does the Church not form more missionary Presbyteries? The men who do the work wish to have the privilege of conferring upon the work in which they are engaged, and deeply interested. Practically they cannot do this now. How is a missionary at Bruce Mines to come to Walkerton in the winter at his own expense to attend a meeting of the Presbytery of Bruce? Isn't the matter absurd in the very face of it? The missionary, then, is exiled. His ecclesiastical connection—at least, his connection with the Church court—is a "delusion and a snare." It is of use to punish or crush him perhaps without trying his cause, but it does not help him. Is it any wonder that he loses heart and hope and abandons his field of service? These convictions are not matters of fancy and sentiment alone to the missionary. They are weighty and vital considerations. Committees, secretaries, superintendents and far-away Presbyteries and Presbytery-seats may seem very well to persons talking over matters in their church parlours or luxurious hotels and offices at Toronto or Montreal. There is something closer and more realistic needed. The men who do the work must have more voice in the work and in each other than they have; and if they are not to be put on a like footing with men in the North-West Territories, is it to be expected that they will be satisfied?

Will any legitimate preserve be invaded if Bruce should surrender Algoma and Barrie Nipissing as the materials for two new Presbyteries. The same superintendency could continue. There would be a saving of expense to the men in these districts and no increase to any one.

Corollary. Give your missionaries a more available representation in the Church courts; and elect the Rev. J. B. Duncan, of Parry Sound, as the next Moderator of the General Assembly, and missionary stock will rise several points. Yours truly,

Little Current, Dec. 1, 1891.

THE PRAYER-MEETING.

MR. EDITOR,—Having noticed that the brethren of Orangeville Presbytery intend to discuss the question, "How to have a live prayer-meeting," I wish to make a few suggestions on that important part of Church work. My sole reason for writing on the question now is: As I have, numerically considered, one of the first prayer-meetings of the Presbyterian Churches of Ontario, I desire to publish the method by which the success had been secured, and the meeting is growing in life and numbers, in the hope that perhaps the brethren of Orangeville Presbytery may be assisted a little in preparing for their contemplated discussion.

I. Preliminaries. The building should be comfortably lighted and warmed. The leader should have a friendly (not frivolous) talk with as many as possible of the old and young people before the meeting opens. This puts him and the people in good fettle, consequently attention—interest. To be highly respected and genial are essential to the minister.

II. Character of the meeting. 1. Praise. The singing should be lively, correct and in keeping with the subject of the hour. I approve of singing five or six times. While a number of new tunes should be introduced, care should be taken to have a number of familiar ones. Congregational singing is desirable and should be encouraged.

2. Prayer. Here brevity and point are necessary. The tone should be tender. A scolding, faultfinding manner is quite out of place. A few earnest words edify. An elaborate, ornate prayer-calls attention to one's self and leaves no good impression behind, but rather a feeling of disappointment. The soul that thirsts to hold communion with its Maker is not gratified.

3. Preaching. The address should be brief, pointed, well sustained by Gospel truth on some practical topic, and delivered with spiritual fervour and pathos. Usually I announce

my subject a week ahead, giving it an unusual title. I am confident this helps. What will the leader make of his subject? Is the enquiry. Old and young talk about it. Interest is aroused, and many of them come miles to the meeting. To make the interest permanent when they do come, expectation should be realized. Let variety, freshness and brevity characterize all the parts—praise, prayer and preaching. Good judgment and self-control are valuable requisites for a leader. I believe in continuity. There should be no dragging. All the parts should have close connection in time. I have no organized prayer-meeting committee, but I have a number of earnest Christians who pray for the success of the meeting. Not any one of the foregoing methods and qualifications, but all of them together, make the chain that secures a live prayer-meeting. J. W. CAMERON.

WHAT CAN ELDERS DO?

MR. EDITOR,—This question was put in these columns some time ago and answers invited. Many answers could be given—some things elders might, could or would do if permitted. Like everybody else, elders are the creatures of circumstances. Human nature presents many problems to the moral reformer. If human nature could be moulded or changed at will it is presumed everybody might be made happy. We all have to learn to take people as we find them, making allowance for peculiarities, or eccentricities, which after all have their uses. The nearest way to arrive at a solution of this important query may be to quote useful examples. One Edinburgh elder, the late Mr. Purvis, was sixty years a Sabbath school teacher; William Leiper, of Glasgow, between 1840 and 1850, was an elder in Greyfriars U. P. Church, and visited every family in his district (he was personally acquainted with every man, woman and child), besides, as often as able, holding brief friendly converse at the church door before morning service. This large church had three doors to the spacious vestibule, where twenty or thirty elders were to be seen each Sabbath morning greeting the members of their respective districts. The city of Glasgow was mapped out into thirty-six districts for as many elders; such was the admirable system under a model minister, whose methods came to be adopted by other pastors and elders in that enterprising city. Duncan Hunter, of Blytheswood Square, and another aged member of Session, did extra duty for brother elders who might be unable to overtake their full share of visitation. Their minister had written the famous book, "The Eldership," by David King, LL.D., a work which sufficiently answers the question here propounded. His large staff of elders had perused the book and tried to realize its provisions. One of their duties there laid down was to visit the sick and dying, especially in large congregations, where the pastor's multifarious duties and calls upon his time limited him to special cases reported to his notice by each member of Session. Four city missionaries, sustained by Greyfriars congregation, came under their supervision. Cottage prayer-meetings were an important feature in their congregational work. The method comprised four adjacent elders' districts grouped into one, whereby the members in said districts could meet once a fortnight at the house of a Church member, affording an opportunity for newcomers to be introduced to fellow-members in a neighbourhood. In smaller congregations a less elaborate system might serve. One duty falling to the elders was a general superintendence of the Sunday schools where deemed advisable—more as ex-officio, to show that the elders had a certain oversight of the institutions of the congregation; chiefly as to being helpful and advisory. The pastor, at discretion, would call upon any elder for some particular duty same as in nearly every well-regulated Presbyterian congregation.

The difficulty in most cases is to find men with enough leisure to devote to extra calls on their time; hence the advantage of having a large staff instead of too limited a Session. Doubtless there is need for the exercise of some diplomacy or finesse if the best results are to follow in introducing members to each other, and how far to make use of the official standing of an elder, lest friendliness should ever be mistaken for meddling interference. Many Church members find fault with their minister for neglecting pastoral visitation, with or without cause. Both pastor and elders have need for wise management. Whatever fosters unity, peace and good-will in a congregation will naturally be encouraged by members of Session sufficiently alive to the exigencies of their position. The term "ruling elder" is unfortunate in a free and enlightened community. So many men do not join the Church except to appear in the pew, considering "Church membership a good thing for the women folks," that it becomes a delicate matter to be dealt with by either the pastor or elders, this is especially so in the United States. The first duty of an elder in any Presbyterian Church is to furnish counsel and assistance to the pastor, especially as to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the spiritual welfare and oversight of the congregation. Where there are no deacons it is usual for the elders to attend to the wants of the poor of the congregation, including the appointment of free pews to those who are unable to pay pew rent. Another recognized duty is for a member of Session to accompany the pastor while attending meetings of Presbytery or Synod. The query of your correspondent seemed to imply that the office was more or less a sinecure. The Sabbath Alliance of the United States has found valuable assistance from the lay members of Church courts of various denominations. Other objects of moral reform have been similarly served as occasions arise. If the office is likely to become over-burdened it may become increasingly difficult to get elders-elect to accept office except with those who cherish the lofty ideal of the sweet singer of Israel. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power!"

AN EX ELDER.

New York, December, 1891.