

## ASSEMBLY SKETCHES.

The Journey to St. John—Travelling Companions  
—Notes by the Way—St. John and its  
Churches—The Opening Sermon.

### *Special Correspondence.*

Casual visitors to the Union Station on the morning of Tuesday 12th inst., having eyes to see would have been impressed with the fact that an exodus of clergymen was about to take place from the Queen City, and the question "whence go they" would have brought a reassuring answer to the "General Assembly." To the non-Presbyterian these words are not of much significance, but to the average Presbyterian much every way, for at this highest Court of the Church, is transacted business of the gravest importance not only to the particular branch of the Church calling itself Presbyterian but also to the whole country; for is not the best interests of the people promoted by the wise rulings of this great Church, which embraces within its fold so large a portion of the best thought and highest culture of the Great Dominion.

The journey eastward was made easy by that thoughtfulness which is getting to be proverbial of the management of what has been fittingly styled "Canada's Pride"—the Canadian Pacific Railway, for two private coaches beautifully fitted up were reserved for the special use of Commissioners for St. John. Promptly on time the train moved off on its eastward journey, and soon the Queen City, with its many attractions, was left far behind. Among the Commissioners on this train were a goodly number of the men who by reason of their various gifts, and powers, and graces are foremost in the Church, and whose presence at General Assembly is looked for as a matter of course: such, for instance, as Dr. Robertson, sometimes called the "Bishop of the North-West," that splendid specimen of an ardent, kindly, Highland Scot, who has done so much to secure for our brothers and sisters in the far West and North, the inestimable privilege of hearing and enjoying the preached Word from the lips of so many devoted and earnest missionaries, from time to time sent to occupy the land, to keep and win hearts for the Master, and to keep alive in many hearts the seed planted in earlier years at the hearths and homes of our own loved Ontario, as well as in that glorious old land from which we get the characteristics of our race, a heritage of true nobility and worth. Of other well-known men of the Church who were our travelling companions we may name Drs. Cochrane, Proudfoot, and the Principal of Knox, without whose presence the Assembly would seem incomplete. Amongst the younger men and to whose name no divinity hall has yet added the letters D.D., we make reference to the beloved minister of St. Andrews', Toronto, than whom there is none more conscientious, or whose life conforms more nearly to those glorious principles of which he is such a loving yet fearless exponent, exemplifying in the every-day events of an extremely busy life, the faith which from Sabbath to Sabbath is expounded from his pulpit. A true friend, a faithful pastor, a modest man, ever resolute for the truth as he believes it to be, and a travelling companion of incomparable charm. None has the high privilege of the closer bond of friendship with Mr. Macdonnell without receiving increased strength for the battle of life and a firmer hold on the things that endure. But we must draw the line here for as we widen the survey and recall the many able and devoted pastors and laymen who were fellow-travellers on this train ere it reached the sea girt city, we are conscious that to even name them would take up too much space for the present sketch. There is not much to note by the way saving that here and there the sameness of the scenery was varied by some beautiful stream or lakelet. Particularly worthy of mention is the beautiful and picturesque chain of lakes near to and culminating with Lake Sharbot. After passing through a very uninter-

esting sketch for miles and miles, these came as a glad relief to both mind and eye. Perth was reached in due time and here the merry hearted and genial minded Professor Hart, of Manitoba College, joined our company. As the shades of evening were gathering round we crossed the Ottawa with its rushing waters, and its varied scenes of beauty, and at our feet nestled the cosy little village of St. Anne. Ever pretty and ever memorable as the scene of the ever old and ever new and ever fresh Canadian Boat Song, so beautifully descriptive of the melodious rhythm of the rapidly flowing water and the feathering oar. On time we slowly steamed into Montreal. Here our numbers were greatly increased by a large contingent from the city and outlying parishes, and by a select few from the capital, in whose number were Dr. Armstrong, Mr. Herridge, Mr. MacFarlane, and of the lay delegates Dr. Thorburn and Mr. Hay, the former being accompanied by his amiable and accomplished wife. These with some few others on the outward journey from Montreal occupied the "Ignace" a beautiful car, and very genial and delightful was the companionship experienced, making the latter portion of our journey like the former exceedingly pleasant. The portion of our journey which lay in the State of Maine was almost entirely amongst rocks and brushy woods with here and there the beginning of a mountain and one or two lovely streams. Here our mind was lost in contemplation over the gullibility of some men who have posed as statesmen in the years gone by, who with the freshness of an infant but with far less sense—for an infant will hold firmly what is in its hand—yielding to grasping people this portion of what nature clearly shows rightly belonged to the Canadian people.

At last St. John is reached, and Old Ocean once more lies at our feet, and we are glad. What about St. John? Well, at first glance you can take in a very fairly accurate impression as to its character and beauties, but you have to know the heartiness of its people and enjoy their hospitality before you can truly estimate it at its worth, and these are being bestowed upon their visitors with lavish hand. There are many fine churches in St. John, and St. David's, in which the Assembly is convened, is large and roomy, and well adapted in most respects for the meetings.

The church was well filled when Rev. Dr. Sedgwick, the Moderator, preached his retiring sermon from the text, "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them," Matt. vii: 20. The sermon was a powerful one from the preacher's standpoint that the church founded upon Jesus was not like other systems, a creation of man, transitory, but was real and abiding, and its fruits were eternal life. He dwelt upon the fruits of love, manifested as the out-growth of the Presbyterian theology which was not cold, but had done much to increase love, goodness and liberty, and to broaden out into one vast ocean of love all classes of men. Resting on these evidences of the fruits of Presbyterian teaching as conformed to present standards, Dr. Sedgwick urged caution as to any fundamental change.

The Assembly was then duly constituted as a court, and the election of a new Moderator was its first business. In accordance with the wishes expressed so many times and unanimously throughout the Church, Dr. McKay, the "Hero of Formosa" was elected amid the hearty applause and well wishes of the vast assemblage. In a few earnest words, expressive of his willingness to give up his own individual preferences in the matter and accept the will of the Church as his own, the new Moderator entered upon his work, which he hoped would be conducted in a business-like way. Thursday the chief business of the Assembly was the reception and consideration of the Hymnal Report, and in this matter a very intense interest is being taken. The discussion was continued on Friday. Thursday evening was devoted to the consideration of Home Mission work, and very fine addresses were delivered by Dr. McMillan and Mr. Simpson for the Eastern sections, and by Drs. Cochrane and Robertson and the Rev. Mr. Macdonnell for the Western.—C.