

## Our Contributors.

### THE GROWTH OF OUR HOME MISSION FIELD.

BY KNOXIAN.

If the members of the Home Mission Committee are in the habit of looking backward, some of them must have peculiar sensations, as they distribute student missionaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Perhaps they are so busy and so much puzzled with trying to balance the income and expenditure that they have no time to moralize about the past. Present duty in the committee room is more important than past adventures in the mission field. The Church cannot live on her history, nor can the work done thirty years ago in Huron and Bruce take the place of work that must be done now in the far away prairies of the North-west. The forward look is the right one for a Christian worker in any department; and it is specially necessary in mission work. What any of us used to do long ago is not a matter of as much consequence as what we ought to do now.

While the members of the Home Mission Committee must therefore attend strictly to business, this week we outsiders can call up the past and moralize and criticize and condemn and praise, and suggest—in fact do any useless thing we deem proper. It is a delightfully easy thing to do nothing, take no responsibility, and talk about the men who are doing the work. It is like sitting on the stand on a sunny day looking at a lacrosse match. You get all the fun and none of the knocks.

Thirty years ago in round numbers, Kincardine or Clinton seemed about as far from Toronto for Home Mission purposes as Winnipeg seems now. The Rev. A. D. McDonald, Convener for that part of the home field, used to come down upon Knox College in much the same style as Dr. Robertson comes down upon the colleges at the present time. Dr. Robertson is the ecclesiastical Van Horne of the North West. The railway Van Horne rules in matters of trade and commerce, and our Van Horne attends to things Presbyterian. Each is a most pronounced success in his own line, and our Van Horne is just as efficient as the other. In those days Walkerton or Paisley seemed as far away as Regina now seems. The "Soo" was almost if not altogether unknown and a young man sent there would think far more about the journey than any enterprising young man would think at the present time about going to the Pacific Coast. Red River at that time seemed farther away than China seems now.

Let no one suppose that the Home missionaries of thirty or forty years ago were lacking in zeal or pluck, or power of endurance. Perhaps they were just as good men in these particulars as any of their successors. But things were different. The country was new. Railways did not run to many places and there was little travel. It is much easier to go to Winnipeg now than it was to go to some points in Huron, Bruce, or Grey in the early days. It is easier to go to China now than it was for ex-Moderator Wardrop to ride from his home in Queen's when he entered that university fifty odd years ago. This contributor endured more hardness riding twelve miles on a stage coach in a certain part of the Home Mission field six thousand miles on the Canadian Pacific railway a few months ago. Railways have made a revolution in the country, and the revolution is as much felt in Home Mission work as anywhere else. All the same, it does seem strange to hear the Home Mission Committee talk about Prince Albert and Banff and places on the Pacific coast as familiarly as the old Conveners used to talk about the mission fields of the Presbyteries of London and Huron and Bruce and Grey. And the strangest part of the business is that places two or three thousand miles away do not seem more distant than places a hundred miles away seemed a quarter century ago.

Those were the palmy days for a stu-

dent missionary. The field was small compared with the present one, but the number of students was relatively smaller. Knox was the only source of supply, and a Knox "theolog" who had not two or three Conveners after him for the last two or three days of the session was not considered of much account. Any such thing as a student missionary having to seek work was unknown. A considerable number of Ontario pastors had a group of mission stations in their immediate neighbourhood that they were cultivating into congregations, and between the demand for curates and missionaries, and private arrangements for supply, every man who could preach was in demand, and even those who were not much gifted in that way could get work if they wanted it.

The sources of supply have increased six-fold in a few years. If our information is correct the supply is quite equal to if not a little in excess of the demand. The student missionary now asks for work, instead of being asked to take it. Probably quite enough of work could easily be found for every effective man; the real problem is to find money enough to pay him. That is where the squeeze comes in.

Do we say that the former times are better than these? No. We say no such thing. We hope and pray that we may ever be delivered from uttering rubbish about the good, old times. The old times were a long way from being all good, and the present is a long way from being all bad. The idea we want to convey is that our Home Mission work has expanded marvellously in a few years and the Church must find more money to carry it on. Now do you see the point?

### CRITICISMS OF MINISTERS.

BY REV. A. T. WOLFF, D.D. PH. D.

How often we are greeted with the remark, "Rev. Mr. Blank is leaving the church at Jonesville." "Why, what is the matter?" "Oh, some dissatisfaction in the congregation. Some of the people got down on him, and he has to leave." It is a sad fact that some such trivial conversation as the above is the explanation of a large percentage of the pastoral dissolutions in our Presbyteries. A small minority can usually effect a change in most congregations. The selection and retaining of a pastor is usually dependent on the mere matter of the personal likes and dislikes of the people. They seem to forget that God's ministers are God's messengers, sent directly to them, and that it is God himself who speaks to them by the mouths of his servants. They mistake entirely the nature of the ministerial calling. They look on the minister as a man who, on the Sabbath, is to entertain them with fine sermons, and to flatter their vanity by his good social qualities and polite palaver.

This is one great source of the criticism and fault-finding so prevalent in most Christian congregations. You will have to start out like Diogenes with his lantern to find a minister who is not the subject of fault-finding from some source. If it were not sad, it would be infinitely amusing to hear the criticisms of different people.

One minister is not pious enough; another is not social, doesn't visit enough; this one preaches too long, that one not long enough; this one speaks too loud, another raises and lowers his voice too often; one speaks too fast, while another is a slow coach. This one is proud, dresses too well; ah! but this man is slovenly. Another would do pretty well, but his wife has some great fault; this one is too flowery, that one too plain in his preaching. Mr. A— would do very well, but he reads his sermons, and I abhor a paper in the pulpit. Mr. B— extemporizes, and often gets his sermons slightly mixed in the delivery. One man is too bigoted, but the next man is too liberal.

These are not imaginary but actual criticisms which the writer has at different times picked up. But even if these criticisms were in a measure just, would it not be better not to express them about those whom God has called, and his Church

sent forth to preach the everlasting Gospel? If congregations wait for the gospel till they hear it from a perfect minister, they will never hear it. Some years ago a congregation in Virginia wrote to President Rice, of Prince Edward Theological Seminary, for a minister. They wanted a man of first-rate talents, for they had run down considerably, and needed building up. They wanted one who could write well, for some of the young people were very nice about that matter. They wanted one also, who could visit a good deal, for their former pastor had neglected that. They wanted a man of very gentlemanly deportment, for some thought a great deal of that. And so they went on describing a perfect minister. The last thing they mentioned was that they gave their last preacher \$350, but if the Doctor would send them such a man as they described, they would raise another \$50, making it \$400. The Doctor replied immediately, and told them that they had better forthwith make out a "call" for old Dr. Dwight in Heaven, for he did not know any one in this world that answered their description; and as Dr. Dwight had been living so long on spiritual food, he would not need much for the body, and possibly might live on the \$400 they proposed to pay!

But seriously, when a man begins to backslide and to grow cold in the Master's service; when he begins to have a distaste for the service of God and the worship of the sanctuary, then he begins to look for occasions to take offence. The man who is looking for such occasions soon finds them, and very soon you hear him uttering the stale expression that has been in vogue for two thousand years, "I don't like that preacher." Then he blows the trumpet of criticism tries to form a party, or stays away entirely from the worship of God's house.

But who made you a judge? Or how will your neglect of duty improve either the minister or the church? Every preacher of Christ has many discouragements, and if you throw hindrances in the way or absent yourself from the sanctuary will you not add to those discouragements? Those who wish to see their pastor able, freer, more wholesouled and cheery, must hold up his hands. They must make him feel the stimulus of a warm earnest friendship. Nor will absence from worship cure these fancied ills. It only creates ill will and strife to the injury of the Church. Neither will it help your own soul. Christian graces cannot grow up and flourish under the deadly nightshade of dominant criticism. You have covenanted to worship Christ the Lord, and how will your absence from worship and your fault-finding please Him?

And may you not have to answer for these things at the judgment day? And how about your children, if you are a parent? You want to see them saved. But a single word of criticism of either the church or the minister may create in their minds a prejudice that will be the means of their eternal ruin. The ministers of Christ may in many ways fall short of your standard, for they are only "men of like passions" with yourselves. "But we have their treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—2 Cor. iv: 7. They who preach Christ, however imperfect they may be, are still the chosen vessels of the Lord, and he who hinders the work by invidious criticisms or drives a pastor from his church, incurs a fearful responsibility. It is also time for Presbyteries and Synods to say that minorities shall no longer rule the churches by getting up a little fuss and driving ministers from their pulpits, because forsooth, a few happen not to "like the preacher."

### HOME RULE IN IRELAND.

"In discussing Gladstone and Home Rule for Ireland recently, the Rev. C. J. Cameron, M. A., Brockville, said: "If this bill will preserve intact the integrity of our mighty empire, if it will preserve in perpetuum the civil and religious rights of Protestant Ulster, if it will retain for Irish landlords the rights and privileges which they possess in every civilized nation of earth—which Roman Catholic landlords insist upon in the United States

and Canada to-day—which Mr. Parnell actually acted upon in Ireland while he led the National Party, then God Almighty speed that bill and bless the man who made it."

The above are eloquent words and the spirit which inspired them is worthy of all praise; but surely the speaker has read Mr. Gladstone's "bill," and if so he cannot fail to see that the bill does not do the very things which he refers to.

Ireland will be separated from the British Empire; the Protestant religion in Ulster seriously endangered; the education of the country placed under the hand of the Romish hierarchy; the land laws, which are the best in the three kingdoms, will be trampled upon, and the whole business end in social war.

Even the South has now become alarmed and the Synod of the Anglican Church with the Lord Primate in the chair, has hoisted the danger signal; but still innocent Canadians are hopeful, simply because a Gladstone is author of this bill. Out of 1229 Anglican parishes in Ireland 1190 refuse to accept the bill. Out of a population of 630,000 members of the Anglican Church, 30 members are in favour of Home Rule, and still peaceable men like Mr. Cameron will "if" and "if" such and such things occur, it will be all right.

There are over half a million of Presbyterians, who almost to a man are opposing the bill, with all the power and influence they can command, for they see that the principles for which their forefathers suffered death and imprisonment, are seriously endangered, and still there is sympathy with Mr. Gladstone and the Irish priesthood who are striving to extirpate the last remnant of civil and religious liberty in that priest-ridden island.

The Ulster agitation is at fever heat, and at the public meetings in Belfast, Dublin and Waterford, these are names I have never noticed before at such gatherings.

Before this appears in print the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will have held a special meeting to enter their protest against this bill. The Methodists, Baptists, Unitarians and Congregationalists; have all spoken with united voice, and said, "We will not have this bill."

If such evidence will not convince well-meaning Protestant people in this country, we cannot help it; but they may live to see the day when they will seriously regret the position they have taken. K.

Toronto, March 21st, 1893.

### AN OPEN LETTER ON SABBATH SCHOOL WORK.

It is generally agreed that the Sabbath School is a most important part of the church's work and that hitherto the church has not been as careful in looking after her interests in this respect as she ought to have been. There are many districts in which there are no schools—many in which the work done is in the crudest form, and even in the best regulated schools there is room for improvement in organization, and in the quality of the work done. It is matter for congratulation that the church now feels this need more than ever before.

In order to effect as great improvements as possible, the General Assembly has appointed a large representative Committee to attend to this interest, as other Committees look after other interests of the church.

One of the first and chief difficulties in Sabbath School work is—the securing of competent teachers—It is asking a great deal of any congregation to furnish out of the rank and file of its membership, twenty or thirty teachers who are really competent to teach, and that under the unfavorable conditions our Sabbath School Buildings usually afford. To be a competent teacher in any circumstances requires preliminary training, and to that end the Committee has laboured in two directions.

(I) In preparing a course of higher religious instruction, and trying to induce as many as possible to read the Course systematically and stand an examination at the end of the year. About 1000 have been reading the Course this last year,