

sub-contract and in the majority of the camps. We held in all 25 services, and at the same time Mr. Cameron took up a subscription on this section for occasional services rendered by him before my arrival.

THE CAMPS

are built of rough logs, the spaces between them being filled with moss and plastered over on the outside with mud. There are generally three compartments, kitchen, dining room, and sleeping apartment. The heating is done in some cases by means of a large stove, in others by a huge pile of wood burning in the centre of the camp, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. The contractors and officers have a small camp of their own which they use as office and sleeping apartment, to all the comforts and privileges of which the missionary is made welcome. Divine service is held in the dining room, the attendance varying all the way from twenty to seventy according to the size of the camp and the religious composition of the men. Very often Roman Catholics attend. Sub-contractors and boarding-house keepers of that persuasion are uniformly courteous. They not only give us the use of their camp, and attend themselves, but ask their men to do so. The services never exceed an hour in length.

THE MEN SEEM GLAD

to have the Gospel preached to them and are exceedingly attentive. They are a superior lot of men for railway labourers. Very few of the genuine "navy" class are to be found here. Many are young men who have taken up land on the prairie and are out here to earn a little ready money to help them along. Others left good positions in the eastern Provinces, thinking that better ones awaited them here, but on their arrival found that all the lighter and higher positions were filled up, and had to turn in with the shovel, pick and sledge. In brief, there are many intelligent and even devoted Christian men on the road, but the same time there is a sickening amount of profanity, the Sabbath is often broken, and gambling too frequently indulged in.

THE SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS

is illegal, yet it is smuggled in and used. A stipendiary magistrate, assisted by several constables, does his utmost to prevent its being brought in, but they are sometimes able to elude the most vigilant watchfulness. If the boundary award be confirmed by the Government at Ottawa these districts will fall to the Province of Ontario, and then ardent spirits could be sold to the men almost *ad libitum*. All the contractors would deplore such an event, for they dread liquor among the men as they would the plague. In many respects it is a pity that the award could not be confirmed at once, but at the same time our present position has an immense advantage so far as the traffic in liquor is concerned.

At Dogtooth Lake, which is about the centre of this section, it is proposed

TO ERECT AN HOSPITAL.

for the benefit of the sick and wounded. Nitro-glycerine, dynamite and dynamite are freely used for blasting purposes, and as some of the men do not understand how to handle it properly, and others are careless, the result is explosions and shocking accidents. The other day two men were thawing dynamite over a fire and an explosion took place. One man was blown twenty feet without receiving serious injury, but the other was fearfully cut about the head. He will likely lose the sight of one of his eyes. A curious feature of the case was a nail driven head first into the bone below the knee and which remained firmly imbedded there until the doctor could be brought to extract it. The uncomfortable state of many of the camps is another cause of much suffering. It is impossible to make them very comfortable. It would not pay the contractors to be at much expense on a building that will not be used more than two years. In consequence the men frequently contract severe colds. Several on this section are now lying very ill with inflammatory rheumatism, their severe sufferings greatly aggravated on account of having no comfortable place in which to suffer. The contractors and men usually do all they can for them, but the most they can do here cannot alleviate their condition to any extent. Hence an hospital would be an invaluable boon.

THE COLD HERE

is very intense. For three weeks in December the average temperature was 38° below zero. Last week

it was down to 43 below. When it is perfectly calm one has no difficulty in travelling on such cold days, but if there be any wind it is very trying, especially crossing the lakes, which in this section are very numerous. However, when the thermometer is so very low there is usually little if any wind, and the air is remarkably free from moisture. On coming to this country one has to unlearn a good many things. It is usually stated on behalf of the country that the temperature is uniform. It is much steadier than in the east, but the changes are very great. This winter, on one occasion, there was a difference in temperature of 54 in twenty-four hours. I was gravely told in Montreal, by a gentleman who had visited this country, that very little snow fell here, and on my arrival I found it between two and three feet deep. The fact is, one season cannot be taken as a criterion of the next, and hence many people form very erroneous impressions of the country, because they do not remain long enough to find out really what it is like. It is easier to bear the cold here than in Ontario and Quebec, yet the climate is very trying on one not accustomed to it. The half-breeds and Indians and more hardy of the settlers have no difficulty in

SLEEPING OUT

in the open air on the coldest nights. They come to a halt at a sheltered point, dig away the snow, pile up a heap of branches for a bed, build a huge fire, cover themselves up with a couple of blankets and sleep comfortably until daylight. A young Englishman told me that during several years experience he never even caught cold from such exposure, and he had slept out scores of times.

RAT PORTAGE

is situated on the north shore of the Lake of the Woods, and near its outlet into the Winnipeg River. It is the western terminus of section 42, which extends eastwards sixty-eight miles. Seven months ago the place on which the village now stands was covered with trees, now it is a village of some 200 inhabitants, with half-a-dozen stores and a weekly newspaper of Lilputian size. The construction of the railway built it up, and its life depends on that mainly. When the road is completed it will doubtless dwindle. It may come to be a lumbering centre, as there is timber back of this, which cannot be brought out any other way. It may also be a summer resort as it has a pleasant and healthy location close by the water's edge.

GOLD HAS BEEN DISCOVERED

close by, and parties are busily engaged prospecting. Coal has been found too, but whether or not in paying quantities remains to be seen. The continued existence, therefore, of the village is entirely problematical. Just now there is material for a good congregation, and as there is no place suitable for holding worship, a movement has been set on foot for erecting a small church. I hope before long to be able to say that the contract has been let.

Owing to the importance of this point I have decided to have service here two Sabbaths in succession. The remainder of each month will be spent on the line. One can have service any evening of the week in the camps as the men attend on an evening quite as well as on Sabbath. An average of five services each week will enable me to overtake the whole section once a month.

THE CASES OF BOOKS

and magazines sent to Mr. Cameron, by the pastor and people of New St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, have been opened. There is no place that could be used as a public reading-room, but a gentleman who keeps a store in the village, kindly consented to take charge of them, and they have been placed in an attractive corner in his shop. Many drop in both during the day and evening, and occupy their spare time in reading. Others take copies to their homes and the camps are being regularly supplied. A record of the number of the book and name of person to whom lent is carefully kept so as, if possible, to ensure their return when read. The collection is pronounced by all to be an excellent one. The papers sent to myself from Montreal and other places, are also of great value in helping on the mission. Anything in the shape of a standard newspaper or magazine is eagerly read. When the

WEEKLY MAIL

arrives there is less profane and obscene talk for a time. Anything particularly offensive to any denomination should not be sent. The interest taken in the reading matter we are able to furnish to the men, is an evidence that it cannot but be productive of much good. But my letter is already quite long enough, and I close for the present. W. D. RUSSELL.

Rat Portage, C. P. R., February 28th, 1880.

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

POPULAR APOLOGETICS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO
MARCH 8TH, 1880. BY REV. JOHN BURNHAM, D.D.

It must be manifest that a strong undercurrent of religious questioning has set in, which it is neither wise nor possible to ignore. Its existence is not to be wholly deplored, inasmuch as a faith we receive by inheritance is in danger of losing its freshness, and stiffening into a mere form,—

"Over the roofs of the pioneers
Gathers the moss of a hundred years,
The living faith of the settlers old
A dead profession their children hold."

The real and freshness of a *new* birth is in measure lost by that life being found in an old traditional way. At the same time we are not to forget that there is a steadfastness in that which has a conscious rooting in the long past which no youthful freshness can yield. One could scarcely live amid the cloisters and gloom of the Abbey at Westminster without being in part an ecclesiastic, or stand by the martyrs' monument in old Grey Friars' Yard and not imbibe some of the old Covenanters' spirit; and, therefore, if whilst still held by the hallowed associations of the past we are so far disturbed as to shake off "the moss of a hundred years," the coming years will be fraught with a more thoroughly Christian Christianity than the world has yet experienced since the first descent of the tongues of flame. At any rate it is the minister's part to accept the facts of the providential life around, and strong in the faith of the Gospel to go forth guiding under-current and stream alike to God. We disown the pessimist's croak, and look forward with hope as

"Fresh and green from the rotting roots
Of primal forests the young growth shoots;
From the death of the old the new proceeds,
And the life of truth from the rot of creeds."

Not only is this an era of religious questioning, it is an age of growing general intelligence. Here we may easily *over* as well as *underestimate*. The student is apt on the one hand to imagine that the general public should keep pace with his "midnight oil," on the other to see a great gulf fixed between his attainments and that of the many; guarding against either extreme, we must nevertheless admit that knowledge is not the exclusive property of the favoured few, and our popular novelists are—with "Review" knowledge—discussing some of the deepest problems of Christian lore.

"Supernatural Religion" has passed through five editions, Grey's "Creed of Christendom" has a steady sale, and both are read with a silent attention, more deep than outspoken approval. We should not ignore such facts.

We shall, however make a great mistake if we form our general pulpit ministrations after the apologetic mode. The ambassador for Christ should give no feeble "perhaps." Exposition and application must be decided; "speaking," not pleading for—"the truth in love," and by manifestation thereof commending that truth "to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Yet even here most effective apologetics may be preached, as our further reflections will make manifest, nor would we, should occasion occur, altogether prohibit more formal evidencing of the truths of Christianity.

Christianity being a new life, may be considered as its own best evidence. Indeed the very call for apologetic effort, otherwise than the manifestation of its life may be viewed as an evidence of weakness in Christianity as now existing, nevertheless, as we have to do, not with the ideal, but the actual, the call must be met. We would posit, first, the trite, yet trite because true, position, that the very best apology for Christian verity is *itself*; its own native loveliness and living power must ever be its chief means of winning sway over the hearts and lives of men. The mind incapable of comprehending an argument may melt before "your chaste conversation coupled with fear." The Christian is the world's Bible, Christian lives its apology, the world's need sufficient ground for Christ's mission of salvation. Said an old, one-eyed, lame confessor at the Council of Nice; "Christ and His apostles left us, not a system of logic nor of vain deceit, but a naked truth to be guarded by faith and good works." "Nothing new in this presentation"—nothing—"Hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown."