

PIONEERS OF OUR CHURCH.

BY AGNES M. MACHAR, KINGSTON, ONT.

Among those who deserve most special mention among the Pioneers of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, are the members of the first Synod, constituted in St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, on the eighth day of June, 1881. It consisted of nineteen members, fourteen ministers and five elders. The Revs. Alexander Gale, George Sheed, John Machar, John Cruikshank, Alexander Ross, Robert McGill, Thomas Clarke Wilson, William McAlister, William Rintoul, Alexander Mathieson, Henry Esson, John McKenzie, Hugh Urquhart, Archibald Connel and Messrs. George McKenzie, John Willison, John McGillivray, Alexander McMartin, and John Turnbull. Every one of this band has gone to the more immediate presence of the Great Head of the Church, but it may be truly said that their "works do follow them," and the Church, whose foundations they then laid, has grown beyond the expectations of the most sanguine among them. The ministers were all men of thorough cultivation and superior mental calibre, earnest and conscientious in their devotion to the ministry and their Master. In the then sparsely settled condition of the country, their labours and privations were far more severe than a younger generation can almost realize. Long winter journeys by sleighs, of fifty or a hundred miles, to attend a Presbytery Meeting or open a church, or administer the Communion, journeys by stage of sometimes two hundred miles or more in the interests of the College, uncomfortable lodging, and still more uncomfortable fare, during the incessant labour of long Mission tours; all the discomforts which now are almost unknown, except in a few of the wilder regions of Canada, were then matters of course in the life of every Canadian Minister, and cheerfully submitted to by men who had had no early training in the hardships of life in a new country. A very happy and united band, however, these early ministers were, and their occasional re-unions—widely separated as they were—were seasons of most cordial and genial fraternal intercourse. All the brighter for the rebound from steady, solitary work. Many humorous traditions are still extant, showing the comical side of inconveniences and hardships, and the elasticity of spirit with which they were borne.

The Rev. A. Connel, in particular, much beloved by his brethren, was an especially genial and amiable man, of a naturally bright and playful temperament, and his early loss made a deeply felt blank in the little circle. The Revs. Henry Esson, William Rintoul and Alexander Gale, were also removed by death long before the majority of the number whose names and memories are still comparatively fresh. The last survivor, the Rev. T. C. Wilson, died recently, in his parish of Dunblane, Scotland, a man of a most gentle, earnest and devoted spirit, and throughout a long life, a most ardent supporter of the temperance cause.

To the names given above, should be added those of the Rev. William Smart, who deserves special mention as one of the oldest pioneers of Presbyterianism in Canada. As a young minister, he preached the funeral sermon of General Brock, and established one of the earliest