

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

MISSION WORK IN MANITOBA.

MR. EDITOR,—Copies of the following communication, prepared by the Rev. James Robertson, have been forwarded to the conveners of the Colonial Committee of the British Churches. The synopsis which it contains of the progress of our Church in the North-West, will be equally interesting to readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN.

W. C.

Brantford, July 9th, 1883.

Many thanks for giving my former letter to the Scottish public and for commending our work. This communication contains a synopsis of the report of the Presbytery of Manitoba to the General Assembly on the Home Mission operations conducted within its bounds during the past year. During last season about 8,000,000 acres of land were settled, chiefly along the lines of railway. The settlement is of course neither continuous nor dense, and hence the maintenance of churches and schools is rendered difficult. Fifty-one new stations were organized and constituted into eleven new congregations, while six of the older congregations became self-sustaining. Since the beginning of this season fourteen additional congregations, or parishes as you would call them, were outlined in territory settled last season, but for which no provision could be made till this season owing to lack of men and means. This means a gain of twenty-five congregations in eighteen months, or about 75 per cent. Students from our colleges were placed in charge of no fewer than twenty-six mission fields this spring and when they return to college in autumn there is no great prospect of any supply being available during the coming winter for those important districts.

Along the lines of railways villages and towns are springing up with great rapidity and becoming centres of social and intellectual life. In these we want to give visibility to religion and to let Bible truth exert its influence in moulding the young life of the country. The growth of the country is, even to us living here, simply marvellous. Four years ago there was not a railway within one hundred and fifty miles of Winnipeg, to-day the steel highway stretches over seven hundred miles to the west of it, with branches to the South-West and North-West. A line 427 miles in length connects Winnipeg and Thunder Bay furnishing an outlet in summer through Canadian territory. Twelve years ago there was not a settler in south-western Manitoba where to-day there are sixteen congregations connected with our Church. In central Manitoba there were no settlers at that date west of Burnside, while to-day there are twenty-nine congregations in this territory; and if we had ministers and the means to support them in part we should have nearly double as many. At Brandon two years ago there was not a settler, while to-day there is a town of 4,000 souls. A little more than a year ago the country west of Brandon was an unknown wilderness except to a few travellers and explorers, to day there are tens of thousands of settlers there; large areas are being brought under cultivation, and centres of trade are getting fast established.

The growth of the Church during these years has kept pace with the growth of the country. Strenuous efforts have been put forth to provide the settlers with the Gospel and with comparatively satisfactory results. The table subjoined will show the growth:

	1871	1883
Self-sustaining congregations	1	10
Preaching stations	9	225
Ministers and missionaries	4	67
Families connected with congregations	198	5,000
Amount contributed for religious purposes	£440	£13,000

The gain in families and mission stations is thus seen to be about 2,500 per cent.; in ministers and missionaries about 1,700 per cent.; and in contributions for religious objects 3,000 per cent. The expenditure of means for the advancement of religion in a field of such capabilities, is like the sowing of seed grain in our dark, rich soil—it is sure to yield an abundant harvest.

Some progress was made last year in church and manse building, but here again want of means hampered sadly. Eleven churches and their manses were erected at a cost of about £6,500, the people themselves contributing about two-thirds of the cost. There is a prospect of a much larger number being built this season. The necessity for churches and

manses is clamant. Services are sometimes held in sod houses where the minister can scarcely stand erect. Sabbath schools in such places are almost impossible, but they exist. The opening and closing exercises are frequently conducted in the house, and the class exercises attended to out of doors. In warm, fair weather this is practicable, but in inclement weather the schools must be discontinued.

Manses are a greater necessity than churches. Houses are not to be had to rent in a country where all are beginning life and neither minister nor congregation is able to build a manse. In winter, where the thermometer falls occasionally to 40° below zero, a warm house is a prime requisite of comfortable existence and successful work. Seventy-two degrees of frost do not mean the same thing in Manitoba as in Scotland, but still intense frost will entail suffering even here, especially upon women and children unless they are well housed. Our missionaries in the North-West are a noble and devoted band of men, but that is no reason why their comfort should not be looked after and their strength reserved for the work of their Master. This has not been the case in the past.

As anticipated in the former letter a large number of Scotch people are coming to Manitoba this year. From Highland glens and Lowland straths they come and to stay as surely as Saxon and Norseman took possession of the Motherland in the days of yore; and they are welcome. There is abundance of land yet to be possessed and people of industry and thrift will find here a generous soil and salubrious climate; but we are anxious about their religious well-being. The Scottish churches have interested themselves in the past in a laudable way, to assist those who went out from their bosom in obtaining the means of grace in the time of their poverty. Mission work in Ontario and Nova Scotia received generous aid and the effect of it is seen to-day. A larger expenditure of means in early days would have added very much to the strength and efficiency of our Church in the Provinces named. When thousands of your people are flocking to this land to lay the foundation of a new, and we think, a great State we feel sure that you must be solicitous that they and their children may enjoy the means of grace from the outset. The Church of England in England and many of its wealthier members are giving timely and liberal aid to the Bishop of Rupert's Land and the Bishop of the Saskatchewan for Mission work, and the Scottish churches and people we feel confident will manifest an equally generous spirit; and if our work is to be successful we must grapple with it now. The operations of our churches must keep pace with settlement else the future will tell a dismal story. The judicious expenditure of a £1,000 now will do more good than £5,000 six or eight years hence. The nation is now in its youthful plastic state. Its thought is only taking shape. The yearnings of its people are healthy, but they must be shaped and guided aright. Our Church is doing its best in the circumstances, but it is not doing, nor can it do enough in justice to other interests. There is in Canada and especially in the North West a thorough fusion of all Presbyterian elements. But for this we could not succeed at all. The size of the Church in the Eastern Provinces of the Dominion and the vast work to be done show that, however willing, unaided the Church cannot give the Gospel to the new comers. Between 75,000 and 100,000 are expected this year. More than one half of them are here now. Nothing is yet done for their spiritual welfare.

Could not some of your young active licentiates come over and help us? Could not the Church make a grant of £60 or £80 to a few of them for three years? Could not some of your wealthy men give each a donation of £200 or £100 to assist in building a house that would be manse and church for a time? Ten or fifteen men so equipped could do more for the furtherance of the Gospel here than in any field that I am acquainted with. These questions suggest to you the most effective way in which the Churches of Scotland and Ireland could assist us. If the scheme outlined seems large our necessities must be our excuse for presenting it. I can assure you, dear Sir, that, were you to receive the letters that come to me from God-fearing men and women pleading that a missionary may be sent them, you could not help being urgent to shamelessness. And surely if the four churches named with the wealth of their membership were to undertake such a work it could and would be accomplished, and with blessed results to the country and the churches concerned. There is that giveth and yet in-

creaseth. To have letters going home from men engaged in this work, men that were known to your people personally could not but have a beneficial effect on the spiritual life of the church they left. The Rev. Dr. Cochrane of the city of Brantford is the convener of our Home Mission Committee. He is conversant with the whole work and has done much to extend it. He can furnish any information desired. Of course any information I can give will be forwarded with pleasure. I send you a copy by mail of last years report, and a copy of a map of our work. You will also find a copy of our church and manse building report. With thanks for past favours, believe me, yours truly,
Winnipeg, July 5th, 1883. JAMES ROBERTSON.

SHOULD SABBATH SCHOOLS BE CLOSED DURING THE SUMMER?

MR. EDITOR,—Now because there are in some of our city schools a number—certainly not a half—who can afford to go away for one, two, three, or four weeks during the summer months, does it follow that the precious privileges of the Sabbath school shall be denied to those who are compelled to remain at home? We think not. How about the young people who are boarding in the city? If they are weak Christians, striving to follow the Master, do they not need someone to open the Word of God to them, and confirm them in the faith, pointing them to the strength alone able to save in every hour of temptation. And, if they have no settled conviction on religious matters, are they to be left free to the allurements of idleness, fashion and custom? Notwithstanding the fact that we are devoutly thankful because of our Canadian Sabbaths, we are disquieted when we remember that it is fashionable in this our land for large numbers to aimlessly wander through the "cities of the dead," having levity as a characteristic of the conversation of immortal spirits surrounded by such awful, though silent eloquence, evidencing God's just hatred of sin. And we are painfully reminded that, though Christian workers may rest (?), the emissaries of the devil will be especially busy. Are we not invited and encouraged to break the whole law of God by excurting—either by boat or rail—thereby making it impossible to "remember the Sabbath day, etc.?"

What about the children of ungodly parents? And those of Christian parents who are not alive to their duty in this regard? Shall they be left free to go with the "crowd," and to form evil habits, unrestrained, unchecked, that perhaps may wean them from ever again darkening the door of the "house of Christian instruction?"

We cannot trespass on your kindness by prolonging this letter, or we would like to show that besides those mentioned, the children of Christian parents; the teachers; the Church, and the world are all greatly benefited by the grand system of international Sabbath school lessons, and can't afford to dispense with these, and the hallowed associations and influence of the Sabbath school for seven or eight weeks in summer. We see no reason for closing the Sabbath school at any time, but think we could better afford to do so at any other time than now, because temptations to Sabbath-breaking are more numerous.—Read 1 Tim iv. 15, 16.

VIGILO.

THE DELEGATES TO THE PAN-PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL IN IRELAND.

MR. EDITOR,—I tender you my heartfelt thanks for your candid, and manly comments on the "blunder" committed by the General Assembly in the omission to include a few representative Irishmen in the delegation to Belfast next year. It would have been a graceful, and many think a well deserved tribute to the Irish element in our Church, including a large number of the membership, as well as of the ministry. It would have shown how ready the Assembly is to honour, and put forward Irish brethren on suitable occasions. And there is not in the immediate future the prospect of an occasion so opportune for doing the graceful thing, which unhappily has not been done. That there are Irish ministers in the Church, recognized as representative men, who could have appeared on any platform with credit to themselves, and to the Assembly that sent them, and gratification to the Church and people of the Green Isle, is too well known, and acknowledged to require any argument. And the misfortune is not mitigated by the fact that the same men sent to former councils are sent this year again, which of itself is liable to be interpreted