

HOW I WON A CONGREGATION.

BY REV. E. RYERSON YOUNG, JR., B.A.

TO the glories of Muskoka, where the woodman's axe is heard, and where the adventurous settlers are pushing their little clearings, I was sent.

My mission, I found, consisted of six appointments, widely scattered. The ones nearer civilization were fairly well sustained, but those that caused the preacher much pains to reach were not so well supported; one especially was neglected by the people. The preacher might almost suffer martyrdom to get to their doors with the Bread of Life; they cared not, nor did they want anything to do with the man. This inconsiderate treatment on the part of the settlers was due to a prejudice that had been diligently spread amongst them that all the preachers were after their money. The absurdity of such a prejudice might have been at once apparent if the people had only thought a moment; for they, themselves, seldom saw a dollar bill, much less a five, in a year.

The services at this out appointment were held in the school-house every other Sabbath morning. The Mission Board had asked the people here to contribute eight dollars yearly to their preacher's salary. This sum to many of them seemed a fortune, and therefore an outrageous amount to be extorted from them.

My predecessor had diligently attended to his duty towards this appointment for a few months. One of the men passed a hat at each service to the few who attended. After a careful count, the contents of the hat were handed over to the preacher. These amounts totalled up to exactly ninety-nine cents.

"I'll chip in another, and make it the even dollar," said the generous steward, who took up the collections.

In this condition my predecessor left that mission appointment to me, and in a private letter he used some strange backwood phrases that had better not be repeated.

To that place I was to go the first Sabbath after my arrival.

The day was delightful, and I set off in good spirits. I followed the bush road as indicated; then I entered a denser part of the forest, where I had to get off my horse and walk, as the branches were so low. I had to jump my horse over a number of fallen logs. Then I came to a rail fence with a clearing on the other side. We call it a "clearing," but that word is to be understood as meaning merely the cutting down of trees and the taking out of some of the stumps. Stones are not counted, as their extraction and removal come under the separate term of "stoning the land."

In the centre of this clearing was a little potato patch, which was directly in my path. My approach was announced by several dogs, and the almost immediate appearance of a dapper little woman, with a waist and petticoat of—well, if it could not boast the proud distinction of Joseph's coat in having many colors, it had many patches. Yet, wital, she wore no rags, and was far neater than many women who live in more pretentious places.

She bustled out to me, shouting to

beware of her potato patch. I tried to calm her fears, saying that my horse was dainty-footed, and that there was lots of room between the potato patch and the fence. She was exceedingly observant, however, and watched my horse with the diligence of a policeman.

It only took a few minutes, and the bars on the opposite side were reached. In this time she found out that I was the new missionary who was expected from the city.

The woman quickly lowered the bars for me, and I led my horse over. On the other side I made efforts to be gallant, and to replace the bars; but she said that she would do it, and that it was not a preacher's work. However, I insisted, and succeeded in replacing one of the poles, which the unsophisticated call "bars."

The "bars" up, I touched my hat to the woman, and was about to spring upon my horse and pursue my way, when the woman's face appeared smiling over

blazes he had experimented with; but "backwoods blazes" he knew not.

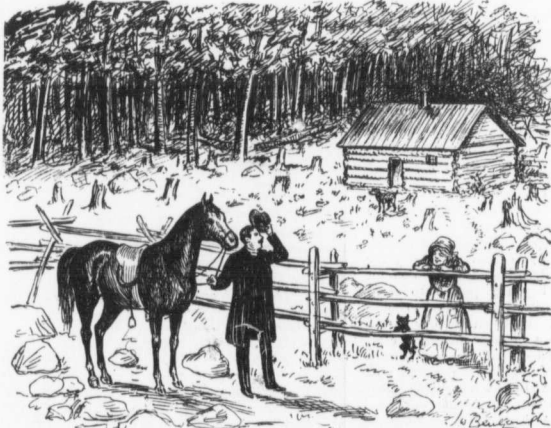
"No," I said; and it costs a newly-fledged grad. something to confess his ignorance—of anything. "I do not know what 'blazes' you mean."

"Why, what'll ye do if ye get lost?"

"Why," said I, somewhat amused at the idea, and the woman's evident delight at the prospect of what she was positive would happen—"why, I suppose I shall get lost, that is all."

"Then the bears'll get ye, then what'll ye do; then what'll ye do?" And she almost clapped her hands in glee over my sorry plight and brin's easy victory.

"Why," I rolled, "I suppose then I shall have to submit." I wanted to press on as time was flying, and I again asked for directions; but she had some more interesting information about wolves and such things to give me, besides that about the mystifying "blazes" and the pugnacious bears, ere she ended up with:



"The woman's face appeared, smiling over the bars."

(Drawn especially for this paper by J. W. Boughough.)

the bars, with arms on the top rail, and face on her hands. She was inclined to talk. I did not wish to be discourteous, and wanted to push on to my service; but I also needed some fresh directions, as the way was very tortuous, and, to any but the skilled in woodcraft, misleading.

To my question about the way, she replied with another question:

"So you come from the city, did ye?"

"Yes," I replied, "I did."

"You must find it very hot up here, don't ye?"

"Oh, no," I again replied, "it is delightfully cool here in the shade of the trees, and by the lakes and rivers. It is the city that is scorching in this July sun. Is this the path I take to the school house?"

"Why, don't you know the blazes?"

"The blazes!" I thought, "what can she mean? Is this a Muskoka oath? Backwoods are noted for that kind of speech." Alas for the ignorance of the city-bred boy, even with a university degree! Red blazes he knew; but blue

"Keep the bush path nearest the lake, and you'll get there all right."

"Won't you come up to service?" I asked.

"Me!" and she laughed at the idea. "I don't s'port no parson; but I'll tell the old man you've come. Perhaps he'll go."

I touched my hat, sprang on my horse, and rode away.

At service there were a few men, women and quite a number of children out to see "what the new preacher was like." Great accounts of him had been spread because he was from the city, and was a college man with letters at the end of his name.

The attendance, even with such inducements, was not what it should have been, and I determined to see what diligent pastoral visiting could do to help the people to an appreciative sense of the privileges that were brought to their doors.

In this work I had penetrated and surveyed quite a large region of territory.