

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

MISSIONARIES FOR MANITOBA.

MR. EDITOR, 'Tis past Christmas, and a number of the graduates from our colleges are no doubt thinking of where they are to labour. Let me, through your columns, press the claims of the North West on their attention. There are at present large settled areas in Manitoba and the North West destitute of Gospel ordinances. West of Brandon there is a tract 300 miles long and from twenty five to fifty miles wide without a minister of our Church. West of the Turtle Mountain there is a belt 125 miles in length and from eighteen to twenty five miles wide without a missionary. In these districts there are thousands of Presbyterians, to whom no one breaks the bread of life. Between 37,000 and 50,000 souls are said to have found a home in the North West last season. At least forty per cent. of these are Presbyterians. They are like sheep without a shepherd. The prospects are that this year the immigration will be larger than ever. What is to be done for the spiritual welfare of these people? Are we going to leave them without the Gospel, or are we to be content to let other denominations do the work that belongs to us? There are required about twenty five ministers to overtake the present wants of our field.

After the meeting of the General Assembly Home Mission Committee in October, I wrote to seven different ministers of our Church, with a view to their coming out here. They all declined. In consequence fields like Milford, Peacock, Virden, Broadview, Bittlesford, Wolstely, Fort Qu'Appelle, etc., have had to be left with irregular and unsatisfactory supply. Let this go on for a short time, and a work that promised well will be wrecked. Denominational ties sit loosely on men here, and our people, if neglected, will soon be found in other folds. There are 400 settled townships in the country in which a Presbyterian minister never preached. The situation is not understood in the east by the Home Mission Committee, ministers, or people. Face to face with the work, we ourselves can scarcely realize the situation.

To whom are we to look for help? No class are so well qualified for this work as the young men of our Church. Every graduate ought to spend some time in extending the boundaries of the Church. It is not to the point to say "I did mission work when a student." If the young men do not undertake this pioneer work who is to do it? The Government selects young men for frontier work. The Roman Catholic Church sends young priests to do exploratory and exhausting service, and why should not the young men of the Presbyterian Church be expected to do the same work? No Church ever had a better opportunity of making her influence felt in moulding the young life of a country; no Church ever had a finer field open for evangelization, never had a Church a better opportunity of gaining strength in numbers and influence to do her Lord's work than ours has in this promising field. Are we to embrace it? We speak of the Divine origin of Presbyterianism. If it fails in the present crisis, many will say our claims are an empty boast. In a few years our opportunity will be past. Now is the accepted time.

What kind of men are required? Young men—not necessarily unmarried men. The settlers in the North-West are largely young, intelligent, well-educated men. We need men of piety, of education, of physical endurance, with good administrative ability, men to preach and to organize the people into congregations. The life will not, for a few years at least, be an easy one. A man must be content to sleep in a car, or a cabin floor, under a cart, or on a luxurious grass bed on the prairie. He must not be very particular about his diet. Plenty of exercise will give him a good appetite, and if not too particular he will not suffer through lack of food. In winter he will find the atmosphere frosty, but yet the climate is healthy, and he will not suffer much through cold. I have lived here nine years and travelled thousands of miles through the country in an open cutter, and never had an inch of my skin frostbitten. The missionary must be content to preach to twenty or thirty of an audience, and to visit families scattered over a wide area. He must be a man of faith in the future, and a man with love to men, and a burning desire to save them. He must carry sunshine into every cabin.

His reward will consist in lengthening the cords

and strengthening the stakes of the Kingdom of Christ, in imbuing with Christian truth those who are the seed-corn of a great country, in gathering congregations that shall yet shine as lights in a dark place, in fishing from the deep sea of indifference, worldliness, and vice, many a pearl for the Redeemer's crown, in the consciousness that he is walking in the footsteps of Him who came not to be ministered to, but to minister and give His life a ransom for many. So important is this work in the estimation of our settled ministers that the Rev. Mr. Gordon, the Rev. Mr. Pitblado, and the Rev. Mr. Pringle are anxious to make arrangements by which they shall be able to spend some time in doing exploratory and mission work next season.

Objections may be raised on various grounds. "The work is too hard," says one. Yes, but if a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you must be ready to endure hardness. "I would like a quiet, comfortable charge," says another. What business have you in the ministry? Leave these charges to older men—men of waning strength. "I am a man of good ability, of first-class education, of culture, and it would be a pity to—" Stop—you are just the man we want, if you had the grace of God. By a process of selection the enterprising, intelligent, pushing men are our citizens. They are well educated, and well bred, and they need men of heart, breeding, and brains to preach to them. If Archbishop Tache, one of the brightest intellects of the Roman Catholic Church, could come out here, a young man, and spend the best part of his life as a missionary to the Indians, let no young graduate think that his life will be thrown away in ministering to his fellow-countrymen and co-religionists. Come for a few years, three or four, and help us, and if you do not like to stay you can return at the end of that time. "But I am engaged to be married." Well, take her with you, and we will utilize part of our Church and Finance Building Fund to provide her and you with a home. Brethren, if you only saw the work, you would be ashamed of your objections.

JAMES ROBERTSON.

MANITOBA CORRESPONDENCE.

OUR INDIAN PIONEER MISSIONARY.

Some neglect has fallen on the memory of our first missionary to the Indians of the North-West. The Rev. James Nisbet was one of those unassuming, quiet workers, who thoroughly deserve to be brought forth into prominence, and to be honoured. He arrived in Red River Settlement in 1862 to assist the late Dr. Black. He never felt content, however, to minister to an ordinary congregation. Belonging to a missionary family, he desired to labour among the heathen. If there is any heathen in the world who has a claim on our sympathies and our pity, it is the red Indian. He is in many respects a noble specimen of man, but living in the cold climate of the North West, his lot is so hard and his living so precarious that poverty, suffering and death are always staring him in the face. Crushed by the vices of the whites, and in will power weak as a child when the destructive fire-water is offered him; the thought of being instrumental in saving such an one, and building him up in true character, inspires every person of genuine sympathy whose lot may be cast among the Indians. Mr. Nisbet pitied the poor red man in the *tepees* along the Red River, and was not satisfied till he was allowed to go west and begin a mission among the Crees. Under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Committee Mr. Nisbet went forth into a region where the roaming savage was not the docile being he is now. This was in 1866. No step requiring foresight in our North-Western work was more wisely taken than the selection of the point at which to begin the new Cree Mission. Our missionary at Okanase, Mr. Flett, was one of the party which chose Prince Albert, near the forks of the Saskatchewan, for the mission. One settler's log hut stood near the spot, but if there is a town of Prince Albert to day, it is because our mission formed its nucleus. The Indians, however, for whose benefit it was founded, were not very cordial, and accordingly it must be surrounded by palisades, that the savage might be kept in check should he become more hostile. Building and organizing was Mr. Nisbet's forte. With his own hands he did much of the work, and was perhaps only to blame that he did not make those under him labour as diligently as he did himself. Work was soon begun among the Indians. Mr. Nis-

bet was too old to learn the language, but made use of the half blood interpreters brought from Red River, who understood Cree, which is but a branch of Ojibeway. The Indians grew more confiding. Mr. Nisbet's quiet, steady-going manner soon gained the confidence of an Indian. Operations in building were continued, and a supply-farm to raise provisions was undertaken. Mr. Nisbet plodded on. His wife was a member of one of the leading families of Kildonan, and not only Kildonan, but all Red River Settlement took an interest in the new venture in the far west, nearly 600 miles beyond Red River. Settlers began to leave Red River and gather around the mission on the Saskatchewan. Service was given them as well as the Indians. The Crees became more and more attached to the mission, and Mistawasis, their greatest chief, threw in his lot with us. It is difficult to estimate by statistical tables how many have become Christians, but the general fact is abundantly patent, that a wild, suspicious, and unfriendly tribe have in sixteen years become peaceful, have settled on reserves, and numbers of them have died as believers in Christ. The Church prepared the way for the Government, and so far as can be seen, the Indian question among Crees, Assiniboines, and Blackfeet has been settled satisfactorily, and this largely through the preliminary work done by the Churches. Mr. Nisbet only lived to see his mission seven years old, but he had not spent his strength for nought. No doubt he was discouraged. Indian missions are peculiarly difficult. The worry of business, the fault finding of the omniscient critic, the instability of a people emerging from savage life, all bore down upon him. And here, it is well to say, that mission boards and the Church generally are apt to think their obligation is done to the missionaries when their salary is paid. It is such a scraping and a gathering to get this done, that we are apt to think this all. Both in Foreign and Home Missions more men die from fancied want of appreciation, and from never getting an encouraging word or a syllable of recognition, than from exposure to hardships or from physical decay. The difficulty is to keep the spirits up. The writer saw Mr. Nisbet in his last days, and is deeply impressed with the thought, that had one-tenth of the appreciative words been spoken before his death that have been since, a tender-hearted, retiring, unobtrusive servant of God would have seen life differently. With the closing months of the year 1873 James Nisbet and his wife both passed away—seemingly without disease, but from sheer weakness; they "faded away like a leaf," and lie side by side in Kildonan churchyard. Let us keep in memory our first Cree missionary.

THE MAGANETAWAN MISSION.

Rev. J. Jamieson, the missionary labouring at Maganetawan, sends the following description of the state of the mission there:

A few notes in regard to our mission work in this district may not be without interest to the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN. We have four principal preaching stations in this field, Maganetawan, Spence, Doe Lake and Beggsboro', at each of which there is an average membership of twenty-eight. During the past summer the plastering of the church at Maganetawan was completed, and a stone foundation put under it, so that it is now comfortable for winter use. Below will be found a list of the names of those who by their subscriptions kindly assisted in this work.

At Spence, services are held in the schoolhouse, but here a church also is needed. An effort will likely be made by our people to build at no distant date, but as most of the settlers are as yet comparatively poor, a little help from some of the wealthier congregations would be very acceptable. At Doe Lake there is a union church, in which Divine service is held both by Methodists and Presbyterians. The people in this section are divided into many different denominations, so that the increase in membership is not so marked as at some of the other stations.

Lastly there is Beggsboro', in the township of McMurrich, and here some time ago, with the assistance of friends in Orillia and elsewhere, a neat frame church was erected. The Presbyterian is the only service held in this neighbourhood, so that the attendance is usually good. At all the above named stations fortnightly supply of service is given, and Sabbath schools are also carried on when practicable.

The prospects of the field, in regard to the work of the Church, are on the whole encouraging. The