

What a scourging of fire there has been during the past few weeks. In the Ottawa region nigh four hundred square miles have been fire-swept, farms and villages laid waste, and some three thousand homeless.

In Manitoba, prairie fires have laid many a home in ashes. Forest fires in Quebec and Nova Scotia have done much damage; while the total destruction of the beautiful and historic town of Windsor, N.S., on Sabbath, 17th Oct., laying the homes of three thousand more in ashes, marks a series of fire triumphs, probably unparalleled in the history of our Dominion.

Two Presbyterian churches have been burned, one in Windsor, N.S., with 75 families of the congregation homeless, and most of them penniless; the other at South Indian, Ont., where church and manse were destroyed. Help for people or for churches will be thankfully received.

Not without its good has been this ill. Such times give more than common scope to human brotherhood, and many a one has been made better by the exercise of his better nature in helping the distressed. What a world it would be if this kinship were ever active, and man "his brother's keeper."

How loose our hold of earth! How blessed they whose treasure is God's forgiveness and favor, a treasure beyond the reach of moth and rust and change.

#### DECADENCE OF PREACHING.

How are the mighty fallen! The interesting, edifying, instructive, learned, scholarly, eloquent, powerful, pathetic, impressive, commanding, inspiring preacher has suddenly disappeared. The Rev. lecturer, witty, amusing, entertaining, acute, talented, able, has followed. So suddenly too has the blow, or blight, or blessing, fallen. But yesterday, columns staggered under heavy-weights. Now "News of the Churches" has for the most part, but commonplacers, who "preached!" Simply that and nothing more.

Perhaps part of the explanation may be found in a "Dream" in a recent "Westminster," where the dreamer saw, from afar, the contents of the Editor's waste basket, and among them the following:—

"Rev. J. A. Millar has had a bad cold, but is now keeping better." (Sent by his wife.)

"The celebrated Rev. Dr. Colborne gave his famous lecture on 'The wilds of the West,' on Tuesday night, at Jones' Corners, to an enthusiastic audience. The lecturer was in his best form, eloquent, amusing, pathetic, shewing strong grasp of the subject, and keen, appreciative insight. We shall be glad to see him back among us. (Sent by himself.)

"Mr. R. Cooling, M.A., a recent graduate, preached on Sabbath last in the vacant charge of Stonehouse. He is a young man of marked ability, of fine address, and his sermons are practical and helpful. Many would like to give him a call." (Left by a young lady in a fawn-colored bicycle suit.)

"Rev. A. McWillis preached at Thornville with great acceptance."

"Rev. A. McWillis has been called to Thornville. His congregation are making strong efforts to retain him."

"Rev. A. McWillis has accepted the call to Thornville."

"Rev. A. McWillis preached his farewell sermon on Sabbath last. There was a large audience, who were deeply affected."

"Rev. A. McWillis left for his new sphere of labor last week."

"Rev. A. McWillis was inducted into Thornville on Tuesday, 30th inst."

"Rev. A. McWillis has settled down in his new field of work."

"The work is progressing wonderfully under the energetic ministrations of Rev. A. McWillis." (Sent by himself and his wife at intervals during the past two months.)

"Dreams "go by contraries." A minister, even a wife, may have sent items, important to self, not perhaps essential to the existence of the Church; but most people think the embellishments untravelled. Editors—weekly, not monthly—in their generous kindness, like to say good and pleasant things of everybody, and their big hearts get bigger with practice.

Honest, deserved, judicious commendation has its place, but indiscriminate taffy-slinging—Ugh! We congratulate our Church and ministry on relief from the burden of GREATNESS.

P.S.—Later — There are symptoms of relapse.

"At Chang te Fu, Honan, work goes on quietly. Many come purposely to hear the Gospel. The outlook has never been brighter here than at present. Within the past three weeks seven were examined and recorded as candidates for baptism. Mr. Wang and Ho I, who have been out touring in different directions, bring back very encouraging reports."