

## Our Contributors.

### Western Notes—Iowa.

BY REV. W. H. JORDAN.

We of the Presbyterian church in the republic to the south, are deeply interested in the good work of the Canadian church, and perhaps an occasional note from the states and from this part of the states may not be uninteresting. During a visit in Ontario last summer some expressed surprise that we had never been in Canada before; but when asked if they had been in the states they answered that they had not. Some knew so little of our geography that they confused Ohio with Iowa, though two great states lie between them. But it is only too true that we are often equally uninformed as to Canadian geography and conditions.

The Synod of Iowa has ten presbyteries, 390 ministers, 437 churches, and 45,356 communicants. About the same number of persons are enrolled in the Sabbath Schools. Of course many of our churches are assisted as home missionary churches. We are just entering upon our third year of self support. Previous to that time all home mission funds were sent to the Home Board in New York, but it was felt that the missionaries were not so well supported as they should be; and owing to the constant demands for new work in other parts of the country the board found it necessary to continually cut our allowance so that we determined upon self-support. Other synods had already launched forth successfully, and Wisconsin and Nebraska attempted it at the same time as Iowa. Time has proven it was the wise thing to do. Our home missionaries are now paid on the average nearly \$100.00 more than under the former method. As many of the home mission churches have their manses, men can be fairly comfortable on the smaller fields, which as in Canada are often grouped with other churches.

To accomplish this self-support, the communicants are assessed forty cents each, while fifty cents per member places the church upon the honor roll. Some of the larger churches give as high as 70 and 80 cents. Of course this is outside of all the splendid gifts of the women, who give especially for the school work on the mission fields.

Our churches are well supplied, though there is a tendency to accept calls to churches farther east, in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

The home mission fields are looked after through a synodical Superintendent, Rev. Dr. C. H. Purmort, now in his sixth year. He is a little man, wiry and strong, well adapted for this most arduous work, which needs tact and strength. He served for fourteen years in the Waterloo, Iowa, church, where our Presbyterian hospital has just been opened.

The Central church of Des Moines, the largest in the synod, has been vacant since the resignation of Rev. Dr. Bigler, who has gone east for the present to care for an invalid wife. Rev. D. S. McFadden, for eight years at Green, Iowa, has taken up the work of the Westminster church in Des Moines, where Rev. Hugh Jack, known to many Canadians, labored for several years.

At this season of the year, meetings are in progress in many places. The pastors are coming more and more to desire the help of their brother pastors than of the pro-

fessional evangelists. In Des Moines the pastors of all the churches have agreed to conduct meetings at the same time, believing that each church can do most with its own constituency. Rev. Frank Smiley, the evangelist, is at Nevada, holding large meetings. Iowa also is favored with five S. S. missionaries who go into the needy portions of the state and do some of the most fruitful work, for out of their labors have grown many Presbyterian churches. Rev. Samuel R. Ferguson, a North-of-Irelander, has been at the head of this work in the synod for ten or eleven years.

The Iowa Presbyterian church paper has recently passed into other hands, and will hereafter be published by the Iowa Presbyterian publishing company.

The Presbyterians have in Iowa, Coe, Lenox, Parsons and Buena Vista colleges, situated in different parts of the state. These have an average of 200 students, Coe having something over 300. Coe, at Cedar Rapids, is one of the best equipped, and endowed, has recently lost her president, Rev. S. B. McCormick, D. D. who was called to Western Reserve University, Pittsburgh. It will take more than an ordinary man to fill the place of Dr. McCormick; but the board will take plenty of time to find the right man.

### Steps to the Higher Life.

BY M. E. M., PICTON, ONT.

When one comes to the stage of life where nothing earthborn will satisfy the heart, it begins to reach out for something that will last, not only here, but hereafter. Something real, something that will respond to its longings. You may look for months, perhaps years. Then some day you begin to review your life and you see that there is an invisible hand, invisible to the eyes but real nevertheless, that has led you on and kept you from many pitfalls, and all at once it dawns upon your heart that it is God who has been your guide, that "behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own." Then you look up and say "Abba Father," and God's heart responds and your heart is satisfied, and His Spirit through the Word bears witness with your spirit that you are His and He is yours. This we will call the first love, for there is another step, a higher love dawns upon the soul, that with its quickened sight now begins to discover on every side the glitter of the hidden gold. It has visions of wonder, beholds and admires the mysteries of the universe, and the greatness of little things and bows down in adoring love and wonder and worship. You can now say that God has been leading you into the marvellous revelations of His grace and revealing to you His thoughts and counsels about them. At last comes the breaking of a brighter vision, the love of the mind. You can at last speak to him as to a friend. You wake some morning with a consciousness that He is abiding with you. This is communion, when we find ourselves at one with Him. We have come to know God, to in a measure comprehend Him, and we may walk and talk with Him with a sense of His complete understanding of us. We may come right into his garden, the actual perfumes from which waiting to

us at all times tell us the right way to turn in all things. This is joy. Then we get the hope of the Church, which hope should be in the heart of every true believer in Christ, and though we sleep yet our heart waketh, watching for the coming of His feet, and longing for the first radiance of the Morning Star. To this height the petty strifes of earth never reach. The shackles that once bound us fall away and are not, and with God's free upper air fanning our face, His peace and light filling all our heart, our prayer now is, "Father, keep my vision clear, that I may see thy glory as it is." Storms will come, there may be deep waters to ford, it is the trial of your faith, but this perfect union of heart, soul and mind with Him never can be shaken. And just as salvation is free to all believers in Christ who are willing to be led by the Spirit, God has his best things for those who will have them. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6.

### The Union Meeting in Toronto.

The Church union conference which was held in Toronto last week was undoubtedly the most remarkable gathering of an ecclesiastical character ever held in the Dominion of Canada. Twenty years ago the most enthusiastic optimist would not have dreamed of organic union as a possibility, but here were assembled the representatives of three Protestant denominations—two of them the leading ones—to consider the question as a practical issue. The spirit of the gathering was as wonderful as anything else. The utmost candor prevailed in the statement of opinions, but there was evidently a manifest desire to reconcile differences and come as close together as possible. While serious difficulties in the way of confederation were recognized, there was no disposition to magnify these, but rather to remove them, and the general consensus of opinion appeared to be that the obstacles were not so grave as to be an effective barrier to the consummation of the project. There was scarcely a discordant note during the entire proceedings, but the utmost courtesy and thoughtful consideration for the feelings and opinions of others prevailed from beginning to end. Some of the newspapers stated that several strong speeches were made in opposition to the proposed union, which was not the case. One or two suggested caution and delay, but not one voice was heard directly against the scheme.

One feature of the proceedings worthy of remark was the attitude of the two larger Churches toward the smaller body. The opinions and desires of the Congregational delegates were given every possible consideration, and, on the other hand, the Congregational brethren appeared anxious to go as far they possibly could in removing obstacles. This Church was mostly ably represented, among others, by Rev. Hugh Pedley, of Montreal, a man of culture and rare catholicity of thought.

### DOCTRINAL STANDARDS.

Probably the most interesting conversation of the conference took place on the doctrinal standards of the Churches involved, but, of course, it was conducted in an entirely different spirit from the controversial discussions of former days. Thirty or forty years ago the mention of doctrinal differences was the cause of heated, and often acrimonious debate, and many a wrangle took