

CLAIMS OF CANADA AS A MISSION FIELD.

Under this heading there appeared in the *Missionary Record* of the United Presbyterian Church, for November and December last, an address, delivered at their weekly missionary meeting, to the students of the Theological Hall of that Church in Scotland, by the Rev. J. J. A. Proudfoot, of London, C. W.

We agree with Mr. Proudfoot as to the extent of the country, the fertility of the soil, and the salubrity of the climate. He has not over rated the spiritual destitution that exists. There is not generally a want of means among the people of Canada to support ordinances, although there are many new stations in the country asking supply, which are unable to defray the expenses. What is chiefly required is a vigorous calling forth of their liberality, by drawing them out and engaging their hearts in the cause of Christ.

Mr. Proudfoot thus well describes the character of the people:—

"They are in general most enterprising and intelligent. Hence their character is such as to render the missionary's labour among them much more pleasant than in a heathen country, and to hold out much better prospects of success. Many think differently. They suppose that the Canadians are in a measure beyond the range of civilisation and refinement; that they are a grossly ignorant people, and are to be treated as such. But this is wholly a mistake. It ought to be remembered, that at the early settlement of Canada, when the navigation of the ocean was comparatively little understood, and when little was known of the country, it required a good deal of courage to emigrate to Canada. Hence it was not the worthless and ignorant who left this country, but men who could not brook the idea of being dependent on others, men who were prepared to put forth every effort to attain an honest independence. This was their character. And this character they have transmitted to their children. In point of intelligence and general information, they are far ahead of the same class in Britain. The same, in a qualified sense, might almost be said of their religious knowledge. They had enjoyed excellent opportunities, before leaving this country, and their general mental improvement, and the increasing comprehensiveness of their views, render them more capable of improving knowledge previously acquired. Indeed, the Canadian people in general are not destitute of the knowledge of the truth. What they require is not so much to know it, as to feel its power—to have it brought to bear upon their heart, and influence their lives—a thing which, humanly speaking, cannot be accomplished without a regular and efficient dispensation of the means of grace. To labour among such a people, therefore, must be pleasant to the most accomplished divine, while the success likely to attend his labours is such as might gladden the heart of the most zealous Christian."

Mr. P. assures the Scottish Theological students that the voluntary character of their Church gives it a most honourable and influential position, and that the tide of popular opinion is fast setting in its favour; whilst "another Church of which, alas! better might have been expected," occupies a strange, undefinable position, nobody "rightly knows where, and holds principles which nobody rightly understands, and which are enunciated in ever varying terms—such as expediency for the time may dictate. Hence, it is to one Church mainly—not to mention the

"Congregationalists, who hold the same views on this point—that liberal and enlightened Presbyterians look as the proper, consistent, and unflinching representatives of voluntary principles in religion."

Having thus aspersed "another church," and glorified his own, as furnishing "the statements and arguments used by all the liberal candidates," (we suppose for Parliamentary honours) the Rev. gentleman proceeds in addition to these "circumstances, every one of which may be viewed as a motive to induce preachers in Scotland to enter upon" the Canadian field, to "enumerate a few motives, more properly so called."

"The first motive is, the growing wealth and comforts of the people.

"The second motive, that the ministers now in the field, unless aided by others from Scotland, will neither be able to hold out, nor maintain their present position much longer.

"The third motive which I shall mention is, the prospect of a comfortable home for yourselves.

"The last motive which I shall state is, the earnest invitation of the people."

Perhaps, in all churches some have intruded into the ministry who were actuated by no better motives than these, but when or where were they ever held up as the inducements that should lead preachers to enter into the Canadian, or any other missionary field? Let us not be misunderstood as intimating that preachers, any more than other men, should unnecessarily expose themselves to suffering, or court want or martyrdom; far from it. Under the law, the people were commanded to give the portion to the Priests and to the Levites. They who wait at the altar should be partakers with the altar, and under the better dispensation, they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. God has denounced a curse against those who rob him in this respect. Ministers have a right to personal and domestic comforts, and ought not to disregard them, but these are not the primary considerations, and should always be viewed in subordination to the great ends of the gospel ministry. The Christian preacher is compared to a soldier who must endure hardness, and not be entangled with the affairs of this life; who, like Paul, (2 Cor. xii. 4) seeks not the people's wealth, but themselves, and who is comforted in their spiritual comfort. It is a libel on religion, and an insult to the Presbyterian people of Canada, to say that ministers induced by such sordid motives as "the wealth and comforts of the people," and "the prospect of comfortable homes for themselves," can be other than a reproach to Christianity and a curse to the country. They would cause many to stumble at the law, and be themselves made contemptible before all the people. Mal. ii. 8, 9. Who does not know that for the sake of covetous priests, teaching for filthy lucre's sake, Zion has been plowed as a field? Micah iii. 11. Titus i. 11.

We rather think that "one church" will consider it as a left-handed compliment to have it said, that ministers induced by wealth and comfortable homes, would be an acquisition to her;

and more so that she is in such extreme decrepitude, notwithstanding "her most honorable and influential position—the tide in her favour, and the countenance of the liberal and enlightened;" that without such aid she "will not be able to hold out much longer;" that the principle of her vitality is voluntarism, and her distinctive feature the rabid cry, "voluntarism."

For "another church" of which we profess to know something, Mr. P. might well have spared his commiseration, and postponed passing judgment on her position, until he had perused Gray's Catechism, or some other elementary work on the subject. His incapacity to define her position, proves it to be indefinable, in the same way that we heard *Sandy Sin* prove the non-existence of the straits of Belle Isle, by the conclusive argument, "I ne'er heard o't." He should have ascertained that he had defined, to some purpose, "one church" before volunteering his services to "another."

Such accounts of Canada, and the ministers whom its people are said in this address earnestly to invite, are fitted, if believed in other countries, to do harm. The duty of every friend of religion in this country, is to dispel the idea that the inferior grades of preachers will pass in it. It is only the men who are well qualified to supply congregations in their own land, that have any prospect of succeeding here. In no case should he, who, from incompetence or want of right motives, would fail in the old world to secure a church and "a comfortable home," be induced to come to this country in quest of them. He will only be more out of his element. Such the people do not invite; but "the earnest invitation" is given to those who, possessed of piety, and intellectual ability, are devoted to the work of winning souls to Christ—who are willing to spend and be spent in it—whom love to God and the gospel constrains—who, relying upon the promise, "lo, I am with you always," would leave the attractions of home and of kindred, would forego the comparatively comfortable settlement and service there—to engage in the severer duty in the colonial church, and who,

Self-denied and unswayed.

By offer'd bribes, burning with love to souls,
Would preach the gospel for the gospel's sake,
Would make sacrifices to carry the bread of life
to the destitute corners of this great land.

All such preachers, from whatever quarter they may come, will be a real accession to the Church in Canada. Such are the men who have borne, and are still, along with the native trained ministry, bearing the burden and heat of the day.

Canada also presents a good field for pious and devoted young men to study for the ministry. The Presbyterian Churches have, in their educational institutions, Professors fitted to occupy the like honourable and responsible posts in the fatherlands. Although the student would miss some of the facilities for the prosecution of his studies, yet he would, on the other hand, acquire a knowledge of the country, the character and habits of the people, and the prevailing forms of error, with which he will soon be called to combat; and be put into a course of training for his sacred calling, which would, to a great extent,