

preached at the West Branch of the East River, another of these stations, to upwards of a thousand people—Mr. McLean having conducted divine service in the forenoon, in Gaelic. I again preached in the same place on Monday, when, notwithstanding the unfavourable state of the weather, a very considerable number attended. Here I would say, is a field well worth cultivating—many hundreds of our people longing for a minister from home to come and settle among them. For my own part, I can hardly conceive a more desirable place than this for one who possesses a knowledge of the Gaelic language, which, however, is indispensable at the West Branch; and I would here take the liberty of strongly pressing its claims upon our young licentiates. I do not think that any one who volunteers to come out here will have cause to regret his choice. But this is only one of the important stations in Pictou county, where a Gaelic-speaking minister would be most warmly welcomed: there are, I believe, at least five or six other stations, where equally large congregations might be collected; but I confine myself at present to the narrative of facts which came under my own personal observation.

I had intended staying in this quarter for some time longer; but the circumstances of the people of Wallace and Pugwash having been urgently brought under my notice by the Rev. Mr. Pollock, of New Glasgow, I resolved to take the very earliest opportunity of paying them a visit. Their case is a very melancholy one. For the last fourteen or fifteen years they have been altogether without a minister, receiving only occasional service from our missionaries. Two years ago, much to their credit, considering the circumstances in which they were placed, they erected a handsome church in the village, capable of holding between four and five hundred. They have also, I believe, funds in hand nearly sufficient to build a manse. On the first Sabbath I preached, the church was nearly full, and more would have attended had the news of my arrival been more widely spread. For some time past, I have been visiting the people at their houses, and have every reason to believe that there are the materials of a numerous and respectable congregation scattered over the district. Though several of the older Gaelic speaking people are desirous of having a Gaelic minister, I believe the great majority would be very willing to receive one who has only English. Ten miles along the shore, to the west of Wallace, we have another fine new church in Pugwash, somewhat smaller than the former. These two localities, which promise by and by to be flourishing villages, together with several smaller stations, which might easily be established in the more remote parts of the district, would afford a wide enough field for the energies of an active and enterprising missionary, and presents a sphere of usefulness second to none in the colony.

Such is a brief outline of my missionary labours for the last two or three months. Meanwhile I remain at Wallace, preaching alternately there and at Pugwash, and visiting the people. Considering the circumstances of our adherents in this quarter, already sick-tired of waiting for a minister from home, and in danger, many of them, yielding to the strong temptation of joining other religious bodies, of leaving us altogether, I do not think that my time could possibly be better employed in the meantime, than in ministering to their spiritual wants,

and supplying them with those ordinances of which they have so long been deprived.

The Provincial Fast, Canada.

We are rejoiced to state that this day of humiliation and prayer, the 18th ultimo, was very generally observed in this city—places of business being closed, and services being conducted in all the Protestant Churches. In the Jewish Synagogue also, the people assembled. In the Roman Catholic Churches we learn also that High Mass was celebrated, so that the whole community with an unusual concord united in observance of the day. We understand that it has been likewise generally kept in a becoming manner throughout the Province. We are indebted, says the "Presbyterian" to the columns of the Montreal Gazette for the ensuing condensed summary of a powerful discourse delivered by the Rev. Dr. Mathieson on that day.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, MONTREAL.

In this church the Rev. A. Mathieson, D.D., preached to a large assemblage a very powerful and eloquent discourse—as is his wont—from the text Isaiah 58 chap. 6 verse—

"6.—Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

"7.—Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

The Reverend Doctor, in opening, alluded to their being that day assembled in the house of God, in conformity with the Royal Proclamation to observe the day as a day of general fast and humiliation—of prayer to Almighty God for the success of Her Majesty's arms in the great struggle in which she is engaged for the defence of the liberties of her people and of the civilized nations of Europe; and for prayer for the speedy attainment of an honourable and lasting peace. He referred to his people having voluntarily assembled for a similar purpose on a previous occasion, and expressed his earnest prayer that the Hearer and Answerer of supplications would graciously listen to their prayers, and with His free Spirit enlarge their hearts, purify and cherish those holy and generous sentiments, and that active beneficence, in which He himself had declared that the acceptableness of the Fast consisted.

There are many who laugh to scorn the idea that God exercises a constant and immediate control over the affairs of men, and that every act, both in its operations and consequences, is determined by Him. They may, indeed, acknowledge that God is the Creator, and in a certain sense the Governor of the Universe, but, instead of regarding Him as continually upholding all things, and by constant and repeated acts bringing about whatever comes to pass, they look to Him through the medium of second causes, they put far from them Him in whom they live and move and have their being, and account for the various phenomena, both in the spiritual and material world, not as the result of his immediate agency, but as the necessary effects of the constitutional laws which He imposed on all the works of His hands when He formed them by the word of His power. This is the philosophy of men, but not that of

the Bible, nor that of experience. Were the operations of his providence attended to, it would be seen that in innumerable instances the course of events was by a *supreme invisible power* so directed as to accomplish some great step in the progress of human affairs, with which they seemed to have no immediate connection. Besides, the ground which such philosophy assumes involved the philosophical absurdity that matter could act independently of intelligence, or that creatures could exist without the immediate and constant support of Divine power. Nor could it be conceived how the great ends of the Creator, in giving being to things animate or inanimate, could be served amidst the multiplicity of subordinate agencies employed unless the Almighty Himself guided and directed all things. If the Bible be received as the Word of God, not a doubt could be entertained that God ruleth in the kingdoms of men. Its declarations were clear and explicit. He is the gracious Author of all blessings. Adversity cometh from Him alone. Severe dispensations are by God's command. When war or famine or pestilence break in upon a nation, God sent them forth. When arrested, it is at the very time he appointed, and the cessation is not brought about by the counsel, or the decision, or the energies of men, but by the sovereign fiat of the Lord God of Hosts. The Divine Government being essentially benevolent, such visitations may prove the most significant tokens of mercy and love. It is only in the light which the Gospel sheds that we can thus contemplate them. Events may fall out contrary to our expectation, darkness might in human sight invest the Divine procedure, yet there is the most perfect harmony in the operations of Providence and Grace. It may be with some gracious intention that God has permitted the sad disasters which have befallen us. The lives of so many brave men may be the immense price paid, but, if the result should prove the extension of Christ's kingdom over the world, and the spread of Christian light and liberty to all mankind, how noble the sacrifice by which it was achieved. If the views of Divine Government he had enunciated were correct, if God alone is the Ruler of the nations, then national calamities are loud and importunate calls to national humiliation and prayer—to return to the allegiance of Him whose authority they had denied. There cannot be two opinions among those, who receive the Scriptures as the Word of God, as to the beneficial results of every act of recognition of the Divine supremacy, and, when life's drama had drawn to a close, it would be found that the prayers of the righteous had been of incalculable magnitude as subordinate agencies.

Christian fasting is more of a spiritual than a bodily exercise; its effects the practical exercise of the holy feeling it cherishes. The prophet in the text beautifully portrays it. Taking, then, the scripture view of the matter in the trying circumstances in which the empire is placed, is it not a duty to come before the Lord and ask His gracious aid, because that He, and He alone, can give success to the fleets and armies of our sovereign. In times of national calamity humiliation is a duty. It is not patriotic or Christian to shift the responsibility to others; all are to blame, all ought to be humbled. Public acknowledgement of God's sovereignty is a national duty. What was the spirit and temper of the national mind? The fleets went forth in nobler array and higher equipment than any that ever before swept the seas. Men of courage and tried naval skill commanded them, and the nation looked proudly on. It thought of Nelson and former glori-