

For several years, every third Sunday, I preached at North Arm, now Richmond, 33 miles distant. Going down with the current, one day sufficed. Returning against it took two days hard pulling. All the people came to the meeting place there in boats and canoes. Generally the house where we met was well filled, but in heavy rains or high winds the attendance was small.

One very stormy day there was but one present in addition to my boatman, and I had a journey of sixty-six miles to preach to him. The attendance was small, but the collection of five dollars showed the gratitude of the good man for regular Gospel services.

To show the changes in that place during ten years, I preached there one Sunday four years since, and found a new church and manse free of debt, a minister for that municipality alone, and a self-sustaining congregation. The number of settlers had been multiplied many times. Bridges had been built connecting the islands and the islands with the mainland. The people, instead of coming in boats and canoes as in earlier days, came in buggies and on horseback.

In 1875 on the Lower Fraser there were but two Presbyterian ministers, Mr. Jamieson and myself, and not one self-supporting congregation. There is now a Presbytery, Westminster, covering exactly the territory which was assigned to me in 1875; eight self-supporting congregations, and some fifteen ministers and missionaries. Section after section of this district has been taken from me and placed under the care of other missionaries. My labors are now confined to the municipality of Maple Ridge, which is a mere corner of my original large field. The population has not increased as we could have wished, but there are now more Presbyterian families in Maple Ridge than there were in the whole of the Lower Fraser, outside of New Westminster, in 1875.

In 1875 there was but one missionary, Rev. George Murray, now of Nicola, in the immense region between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains. There is now a Presbytery—Kamloops—with some ten or twelve missionaries.

Within the bounds of this Presbytery are the celebrated Cariboo and Kootenay gold fields, into which is pouring a population that needs most urgently the services of the ministers of religion.

In 1875 there were three Presbyterian ministers on Vancouver Island, and not one self-supporting congregation. There is now a Presbytery, Victoria, with eight self-supporting congregations and fourteen ministers and missionaries. In this Presbytery are the great coal fields of Wellington and Union, and the gold mines of Alberni, with their growing populations.

I have often spoken of the wild appearance of the Lower Fraser in 1875. This continued almost unchanged until the con-

struction of the C.P.R. in 1880-81. For several years in going from Langley to Sumas and Matsqui, to conduct service every third Sabbath, I rode for twenty-two miles through unbroken forest. So little travelled was the road that only twice in all these years did I meet a traveller. I often used to wish to meet some one, especially in the long wet rides in winter.

But with the beginning of railway construction near Yale, in 1880, a new era of prosperity dawned upon the province. Up to that time most of the settlers on the Lower Fraser were very discouraged. They felt like men in banishment, away behind the towering Rocky Mountains. With few exceptions they wished to sell out and return to where they came from. But fortunately few came in to buy, and they were obliged to stay.

With railway construction their hopes revived. They set to work in earnest, clearing land. New comers poured in and settled upon vacant claims, so that in 1891 it was stated in the newspapers that there was not in the whole of the Lower Fraser a vacant lot. To-day many of the settlements resemble those of the older Provinces, with large clearings, fairly good roads, substantial dwellings, schools and churches.

The pressure of the hard times of the last two or three years came with crushing weight upon our young province. The depression found most of our settlers still struggling with heavy timber, trying to get as much land cleared as would support their families,—yea, more, found most of them in debt. Ministers and missionaries have suffered as well as the people, the former having sometimes to give from their small resources the necessaries of life to the latter.

But the liberal giving of our brethren throughout the Dominion, and in Britain, to the Home Mission Funds, many of their fellow Christians in British Columbia, in addition to the hardships of the hard times, would have been deprived of the means of grace, at a time when they were specially needed and valued.

But the clouds are lifting. With the revival of trade many of the settlers hope to sell parts of their claims to new comers, and thus free themselves from the burden of debt. The mining, lumbering, and salmon fishing industries are all active; and with the continuance of prosperity, and with the help of the Church for a few years longer, it is hoped and believed that most of our present Home Mission Fields in British Columbia will be self-supporting.

The difficulties and discouragements incident to Home Mission Work in a new country have been disclosed to some extent in the foregoing. Others might be mentioned.

But while there are drawbacks and even hardships, there are not lacking attractions and pleasures. Referring to myself I cannot express the intense and ever increasing delight which I have had taking long journeys to preach the Gospel of Christ to my