

HOME MISSIONS.  
(WESTERN SECTION.)

The Home Mission Committee present in their Annual Report to the General Assembly, an outline of what has been attempted and accomplished during the year. Statistics of Mission Stations, and names of Missionaries and fields occupied, can give no adequate idea of the work done, the labors undergone, the difficulties surmounted, in the prosecution of the vast pioneer Mission work entrusted to the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The settlers in the North-West Territories had a fair crop during the year 1896, but distance from the sea-board, cost of transportation, and other causes, materially affected and reduced the resources of the farmers, and as a consequence, their ability to give for the support of Gospel Ordinances. In spite, however, of drawbacks, the Stations have as a rule done well, and appreciate the efforts made by the Committee, and the Canadian and British Churches, to enable them to enjoy the services of a regular Ministry.

The Committee are glad to state that they have been able to pay the Missionaries in full, without any special appeal to the Church to make up a deficit. For this gratifying state of affairs, the Church is under obligation to the British Churches, more than to our own congregations. But for the timely aid rendered, they would have been unable to meet their obligations.

In the report, in addition to the regular congregational contributions to the funds, there are presented the amounts expended by Presbyteries, congregations and societies for Mission work in cities, towns and country districts, not passing through the Treasurer's hands. The list is necessarily incomplete, but in so far as the Convener has been able to secure returns, they have been reported. The report also contains particulars of the progress of Home Mission work in the different Presbyteries and Provinces, reports of the Students' Missionary Societies, to the Lumberman's Mission, and the names of congregations in Scotland and Ireland, as well as individuals, who have sent contributions.

At the request of the Home Mission Committee, as intimated to last General Assembly, and with its authority, to present to the British Churches the claims of the North-West and British Columbia, Dr. Robertson left Canada end of October last on his Mission. Since that time he has been constantly engaged in preaching and addressing congregations and meetings on Sabbath days and week days, meeting with the Conveners of the various Colonial Committees, and appearing before Synods and General Assemblies in behalf of our work. Dr. Robertson's letters to the Convener, show how indefatigably he has persevered in his advocacy of North-West Missions, often in the face of obstacles that would have discouraged a less courageous and zealous deputy. That he received a cordial welcome from the officials, the leading clergymen and brethren in the several Churches, need hardly be said, although in many cases, where he expected large and continuous contributions for a period of years, his expectations were not realized. There are still to be found among the Churches in Britain, not a few, who do not realize the vastness of our Home Mission Territory, nor the claims which the Canadian Church has upon the Presbyterians in the Motherland. There are others, who in view of our progress as a Church during the past 25 years, and our liberality in other directions, cannot understand why we should need help at all. And there are large and wealthy congregations, who because of pressing obligations connected with Church building, or Schemes towards the support of which their missionary contributions are pledged for years, are unable to assist us. In addition to this, there were last year, as indeed there are almost every year in Great Britain, ministers of our Church, pleading for special contributions in aid of individual churches, or missions. These, it is presumed, have the endorsement of Presbyteries in some cases, in others they have not. In the opinion of your Committee, appeals of this kind should not be countenanced by the General Assembly, nor continued. Whether the response is much or little, they detract attention from the great Home Mission work of the Church, in whose interests we are endeavoring to enlist the sympathies and liberality of the British Churches.

Notwithstanding all these drawbacks, Dr. Robertson has deepened the interest in the Canadian Missions very materially, and has reached localities never visited before, and secured pledges from a goodly number of Churches for longer or shorter periods, as well as individual contributions. Some congregations, that have given for the past three years, have intimated their inability to do so longer, but it is hoped that others will take their place.

The financial statement shows a balance in hand of \$4,000.00. That the balance is not against the Fund, is not due to the increased contributions of congregations, but rather to the severest economy in the administration. The Committee feel that they ought not to go beyond the revenue that can be reasonably expected, and must keep out of debt. Some of the largest and wealthiest congregations

are giving considerably less to Home Missions than in former years; and others give small amounts in proportion to what they give to other objects, that really require less assistance. Many congregations give nothing whatever, and strange to say, Mission Stations that have been aided for many years give nothing, or the merest pittance, while contributing generously to other Schemes of the Church. These anomalies your Committee cannot remedy, as they are not acquainted with all the facts, but Presbyteries should certainly carefully enquire into them, and insist that Mission Stations, under the care of, and supported by Home Mission funds, should recognize the prior claims of that fund to their contributions, whether they be small or great.

Unless the congregations throughout the Church give more liberally to the fund, the Committee instead of making grants to the many new fields, that are seeking help in the vast mining regions of British Columbia, (towards which thousands are now looking), must not only decline, but reduce what amounts have been promised. The entire amount received from the British Churches during the year, could profitably have been spent in the mining regions alone. Such places also as the Mormon Territory, in the North-West, need very large grants, if the Church is to hold them at all. In some places the entire salary has to be guaranteed the Missionary for a time. The brethren in British Columbia and the North West, and in the larger Mission fields, such as Algoma, in view of the lack of means at the disposal of the Committee, have found it necessary not only to decline applications made to them, but to reduce the amounts asked from the Committee. But such a state of matters effectually bars all progress, and jeopardises the very existence of many of our Mission Stations in promising fields.

The Committee are profoundly thankful for the handsome contributions received from the British Churches during the past three years, but the Church in Canada should not regard the help thus given as a reason for lessening their contributions to the fund. We should rather show to the British Church, that for every dollar they give there will be a similar increase in our own gifts. The Church in Canada must feel that upon its own efforts and liberality primarily and mainly, rests the responsibility of evangelizing the North-West. While outside help is always welcome, it can never be depended upon as a certainty, and the more we do for ourselves, the more likely are we to secure the continuance of contributions from the British Churches.

## (EASTERN SECTION.)

The following paragraphs indicate the condition of the Eastern Section:

In the fields supplied by our missionaries, there are about 4,000 families who hold connection with the Presbyterian Church. They raise for the support of ordinances about \$16,000 a year and contribute to the Schemes of the Church with a fair measure of liberality. On the whole they meet very well one of the conditions on which the Church is expected to help them liberally, namely, that they help themselves, if not to the full extent of their ability, at least to a degree comparing favorably with that of the strong congregations.

The Home Mission Committee with us acts as a committee of distribution of probationers, or ministers without charge. A sub-committee meets monthly for this work. It receives the application of Presbyteries for the number of men they require to supply vacancies during the next month and assigns that number to them, taking care that each man shall have a fair opportunity of preaching in as many vacancies as possible, until he is settled or Presbyteries refuse his services. Within the Presbytery, the distribution of the preachers is made by the Presbytery. The committee appoints to Presbyteries—twenty Presbyteries appoint to fields. The number on the roll of the committee varies from a half dozen to two dozen. During the two years past there has been more difficulty in securing work for the men, than men to meet the demands of Presbyteries. These laborers report monthly to their Presbyteries; and if there is anything due them for services by the congregations in which they have been working the Presbyteries collect it, or if satisfied with the giving of the people, request the Home Mission Committee to pay.

The debt at the beginning of last year was \$3,690.77. This debt has been reduced to \$1,597.69. Towards the reduction Christian Endeavor Societies contributed \$1,261.68. The special thanks of the Church are due to these societies for voluntarily undertaking last September, to contribute 25 cents a member to Home Mission debt extinction, and for carrying out their resolution so effectively. We look to them to repeat their effort this year in order that the remaining debt of \$1,660 may be entirely swept away. The total receipts for the year were \$15,694.60, of which \$2,100.84 were for the North West. The total expenditure for the year including the amount for the North West was \$13,071.61, giving a surplus on the year's work of \$2,623.08. This large amount is the more gratifying