

a sermon. The few exceptions that I refer to, would, I believe, much rather see the Church vacant than see a Free Church Minister in it, and would rather stop at home than come to hear him if he were there. All however that do not profess to hold Free Church principles, I am happy to say, do not go thus far, on the contrary a considerable proportion of them are prepared to merge the difference between themselves and the Free Church party, in the desire in which they participate of having a settled pastor among them, and were this desire granted, it is my impression it would, to a very great extent, effect a perfect reconciliation between the parties, so that they could dwell together like brethren in unity. I shall only add at present that a very general desire for the means of grace has been expressed in every place I have yet visited in this country, and disappointment felt when no immediate prospects were held out to them. The field is wide, the demand for religious ordinances in many places very urgent, but the labourers are few. There are in these things materials enough to form a claim upon the aid of every one who can do anything for the furtherance of the gospel, and a loud call upon all who believe in the efficacy of prayer for intercession with Him who can prepare and send forth labourers into his vineyard, and who, by the supply of the spirit of grace, can make their labours effectual to salvation. He only can refresh with plentiful rain his heritage when it is weary.

The following very interesting letter recently received by the co-venor of the Synod's Home Mission Committee, continues the narrative of Mr. Steel's extensive and efficient labours as a missionary:—

CHATHAM, Feb. 21st, 1845.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

After leaving Hamilton in November last, I went directly to St. Thomas. In that town and neighbourhood I spent three weeks. There a large number of Presbyterians assemble when the state of the weather and roads permits of it. But there are several preaching stations in the district besides St. Thomas, where it is expected the minister placed in that town will preach as often as practicable, in order to accommodate old people and such as are too far from the principle place of worship to repair there every sabbath. Here, the people, if they ever had church going habits, seem to have greatly lost them. Anything appears a sufficient excuse with too many of them for absenting themselves from the house of God on the sabbath. In St. Thomas, an acceptable clergyman ought to have a large congregation, and such a congregation as would be well able to support him. There is a general desire expressed to have one, but no such measures are adopted, or such sacrifices made, excepting by a few, as would lead any one to believe that they put any great value upon religious ordinances, or that they would at least for a time regularly wait upon them if they were steadily administered among them. This is an evil greatly to be lamented, but an evil the sooner it is attended to the easier it will be remedied. The number and circumstances of these people form a strong claim upon the earliest services of those who may have it in their power to help them. In St. Thomas, under the faithful ministrations of a devoted pastor, might be formed one of the most flourishing congregations in Canada West. If these people are left much longer in their neglected state, it will become a work of considerable difficulty to teach them to value and improve the means of grace, and to keep the sabbath, and to reverence the sanctuary of the Lord.

Much is done here to keep alive the leaven of Presbyterianism, by the services of Mr. McColl, a catechist in the district, who has been the means of keeping many of them from joining some of the fanatical tribes among them, that would inspire them with prejudice, if not with deadly hostility, against the church of their fathers. Here, as well as in most other parts in Canada, many efforts and

some craft is used to alienate the minds of Presbyterians from their own Church. Most other denominations are more zealous and active in propagating their peculiar dogmas, forming congregations, and building churches, than the Presbyterians: although in this part of the country, as in many others, there is none more able. In some of the townships about this place, and along the shores of Lake Erie westward, it is to be observed, and worthy of observation, that at the last census, which was taken about two years since, the Presbyterians numbered half the population. But many of them not having the ministrations of a clergyman of their own persuasion to wait upon, have gone over to other denominations. Some have joined the Episcopalians, some the Methodists, and some the different kinds of Baptists, which not only exist, but are pretty numerous throughout Canada, while others go near to places of worship, and are sinking into heathenism. Shall it be believed when I say that Presbyterians, and Scotchmen too, who have been taught better things in their native land, violate the sabbath here without shame or fear or any other restraint—who cut their firewood, drive waggons loaded with merchandise, and engage in other kinds of work when they should be in the house of God, and smile at those that reprove them. But here I may mention as one of the circumstances that accounts for this state of things, that between S. move and Amhurstburg, a distance not much short of 200 miles, and for a breadth of about 40 miles back from the shores of Lake Erie, there is at present no settled Presbyterian clergyman, either in connection with the Established Church of Scotland or of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Here is a large tract of country beautifully situated, densely settled, and most of it exceedingly rich. Its Presbyterians should furnish sufficient work and support for twenty clergymen. Skill and energy are greatly wanted here to turn the resources of the country to advantage. Many have come to this country in a state of poverty, but in general not more devoid of means than ignorant of agriculture. They have, however, greatly improved their circumstances—some have already acquired a little independence, and others are getting fast over their difficulties. Had they, however, been trained to the profession which many of them embraced on settling in this country, they would have been further advanced, and more independent than they are. Notwithstanding, taking them collectively, they have the means of supporting religion, and they would support it were they alive to a sense of its importance, and an interest in its prosperity awakened amongst them. Although many of our people in this land have gone after strangers—although some have lost much of the interest they formerly felt in the welfare of our church, and others have sunk into lukewarmness or utter apathy concerning religion in general, yet I feel convinced, from circumstances I have witnessed, but which I cannot stop here to specify, that there clumbers in the back woods of Canada much of that spirit which has, for the last twenty months, distinguished so much the Free Church of Scotland in the eyes of Christendom. Agency, proper agency, is wanted to stir it up, and call forth its energies into exercise. Look for that agency across the Atlantic. Try to obtain it. If you succeed, Canada, if I mistake not, will do wonders on its own footing, and from its own resources. You will in this locality, as well as in others, meet with irreligious and with unreasonable men, men that call themselves Presbyterians—aye and Free Churchmen—that have a thousand objections to urge against the building of churches and the supporting of clergymen, when such matters are proposed to them. One will gravely tell you he has an instalment to pay for his land next year, and that must be paid whatever will happen, otherwise he will be turned out, and therefore he cannot give anything for the support of religion till that be settled. Another says, what needs he sign a paper for any such purpose? he may have

a bad crop next year and may therefore not be able to pay his subscription. Another one, after paying out his own land and pocketing his deed, has purchased land for his son, and he tells you that must be paid whatever shall happen. Another has, by past misfortunes, got himself involved, and he must get clear of his debt before he will take more upon his head, and he cannot help you. Thus every excuse and any excuse is caught at, and urged in order to get free. The secret is, they are unwilling, and therefore there is a lion in the way. But there is a spirit very different from this to be found in Canada. Even here are men who are willing to support religion according to their ability—and not a few even beyond their ability. To these, under providence, must Canada look in the meantime, as the mainstay of its Presbyterianism. We hope their leaven will spread and increase. It is greatly to be desired that ministers and missionaries could be got to visit the neglected parts of the Lord's vineyard in this country, that those who are piously disposed might have the more opportunity of manifesting their zeal in behalf of religion, that others might be led to imitate their example. Further, were nominal Christians taught that Godliness is profitable unto all things—that the true religion is a bulwark to a nation and to property, as well as a means of salvation to men, they might be led first from worldly considerations to give it more countenance and some support, and ultimately be led to take a higher view of it, and so receive and cordially support it as the ordinance of God for their own eternal salvation.

I have preached in all the Townships excepting Southwold, between St. Thomas and the shores of Lake St. Clair: viz., Dunwich, Aldborough, Oxford, Howard, Harwich, Raleigh, Chatham, and Tilbury East. With the exception of Aldborough and the town of Chatham, we held our meetings in School-houses, and nearly all of these houses are of a most miserable description, cold and uncomfortable. The people, on being asked "why have you not better places of worship?" (for such questions I frequently put to them,) answered generally, "what need we give ourselves trouble about these things? we seldom have need of them: we scarcely ever see a Minister." In all these places, with two exceptions, we had very full meetings, and some of them were much crowded. The exceptions were cases in which intimation had not been sufficiently spread. We have had with us Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, &c., in almost every place. Many of these, originally belonging to the Presbyterian Church, are yet disposed to join us, if there were a Presbyterian Minister within their reach. Not a few of our people here have joined a sect whose Minister, I am credibly informed, advises his people not to teach their children the lessons of christianity till they grow up and receive the spirit!! What would the Presbyterians of Scotland say, if they heard that this misguided man's diabolical council is listened to, and to a considerable extent acted upon? Could a Jesuit from Rome teach doctrines more subversive of Christ's Kingdom, and of the best interests of society, or more calculated to establish the Prince of Darkness upon his throne, than this man's advice is? We hope the day is not far distant, when such teachers as this will be obliged to hide their heads, even in Canada, where almost all sorts of doctrines obtain currency.

I have preached in Zorra and Moos twice, and in Eckfrid several times. There are large bodies of Presbyterians in these Townships, and they have got up three places of worship, but there is none of them seated yet, nor properly closed in; but they are prepared to finish them all, if they had any prospect of having a Clergyman soon settled among them. The Elders in Eckfrid meet every Sabbath in each other's houses, and engage in religious services with the people of the neighbourhood. Meetings of this sort on the Sabbath, and prayer meetings, are very much neglected through Canada. The education of the young is also greatly overlooked, sometimes owing to a difficulty