

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

A TRIP TO BRANDON.

CRY FOR MISSIONARIES.

The city of Brandon is less than two years old, and already it has some 3,000 or 4,000 people. It is a marvel of enterprise. Its buildings are chiefly wooden, neatly constructed, and painted a dark brown. It has three neat church buildings—Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopal—costing, probably, \$5,000 each. Your correspondent lately paid a church visit to Brandon, and was much pleased with the appearance of things there. The pastor, Rev. Mr. Ferries, has lately resigned from ill health, and the vacant congregation is dependent on the Presbytery for supply. The congregation has a well-organized session of five active elders, a Sabbath school of upwards of 100 pupils, and an excellent Bible class conducted by Elder Matheson, formerly of Clinton, well-known as an Assembly elder. The superintendent of the Sabbath school, and church treasurer, is the Clerk of the County Court, a Mr. Barr, formerly of Millbank, Ontario. The membership is given as about eighty; the congregation is about 250 in the morning, and nearly 400 in the evening, quite filling the church. All this speaks well for the energy of the late pastor, and the activity of the young congregation. A good deal of attention seems to be given to the cultivation of music and psalmody, and there is an excellent choir. A literary association in connection with the church meets fortnightly. The visit to Brandon was a very pleasant one. "It at Brandon this satisfactory state of things ends. In the district around, especially to the west, there is DEPLO- RABLE NEGLECT in our mission work.

Near Brandon are the following groups of stations: I. Grand Valley; II. Milford; III. Peacock's. West of Brandon are: IV. Virden; V. Wolseley; VI. Broadview; VII. South Moose Mountain; VIII. Regina; IX. Moose Jaw. Now these are not individual points, but all are centres of some importance. Distributed among them in summer there were five student missionaries. At present there is not a missionary settled at one of these points. Not more than two of them have even the most temporary supply. In seven of them, representing not less than thirty preaching places, the Gospel has not been heard from Presbyterian lips for several months. We have fallen further behind this year in overtaking the new work than during the last ten years. *Only one missionary has been sent to us in the last half-year*; and this at the end of a season in which the emigration is estimated by tens of thousands. We have till this year had the honour in the North-West of being the pioneers throughout the country. That distinction is gone, let us hope not forever.

Now, all this has happened in the face of the most passionate appeals from most of these places for supply, and by people willing to contribute largely. A few examples may be cited:

1. At the close of the service in Brandon, a most gentlemanly man, from the Milford group, asked a few minutes' conversation. He urged most earnestly for a missionary. "We have a majority in one settlement of Presbyterians. Yet our children can only attend a Methodist service. Oh! don't forget us."

2. On Sabbath afternoon, a gentleman interested in Virden, asked that the claims of that important centre be not lost. "A student missionary did capital work there last summer; all that is being lost in the Virden group of stations. Others are there entering into our labours."

3. A deputation of two leading men of Wolseley waited on your correspondent. One of them, the leading merchant of the place, said: "We are in the majority as a church, but we have been absolutely neglected. With the adjoining settlements we could soon be self-sustaining. Will not the Presbytery take up our case?"

4. A relative of your correspondent has taken up land in the South Moose Mountain district. A large number of townships have been taken up by settlers, and he had never heard of a Presbyterian missionary having been through the region.

5. A letter has been received by two young men in Broadview, intelligent young Scotchmen, who came out from the neighbourhood of Falkirk. They say, "We have no service of our own Church, of which we are members. We are anxiously looking for it. A hall is being put up for all denominations to use. We

hope that the Presbytery will be able to give us supply that we may soon have a church of our own."

6. In Regina, the Methodist and the Episcopal Churches have both had regular missionaries for three or four months, and we have none, though one is expected immediately.

CONCLUSIONS.

How has all this occurred? Our Home Mission Committee is not out of funds—at least grants were made to help most of these districts in October last. The real difficulty is proper steps have not been taken to get men. Three agencies have been interested in the matter: I. The Assembly's Home Mission Committee; II. The Superintendent; III. The Presbytery of Manitoba. The Presbytery of Manitoba has an enormous amount of work on hand. This year, in contrast with its custom for years past, it virtually handed the whole matter of mission supply to the Superintendent. The Home Mission Committee did the same thing. The Superintendent wrote letters to a number of persons asking them to accept appointments. But he had so much work to do in organization in the part of Manitoba lately added to the Province, that it took his undivided attention there. In October and November, when efforts, constant and determined, should have been put forth for men, these efforts were not made. No blame can attach to the Superintendent in the matter. He had his work pressing on his heels, which must be attended to. Between the Presbytery and the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, the blame lies. The Superintendency has been a great success, but in changing to a new system, there will always be a certain amount of loss of force. The thing now is to repair the loss as soon as possible. We must never allow our Church to take a second place in mission work in Manitoba. We want three or four ordained missionaries at once, and as large a band of student catechists as can be spared. We want actions, not words. The line of railway from Brandon to Regina—a distance of 250 miles—now unoccupied by us, must be taken up by our invading force in the spring. May God give us grace to occupy it.

SIGMA.

Winnipeg, Feb. 24th, 1883.

DR. COCHRANE'S REPORT ON BRITISH COLUMBIA.

MR. EDITOR,—Will you be kind enough to allow me room to make some comments on the Report of the Deputy sent to this Province by the General Assembly as published in your issue of October 25th? As I do not wish judgment to go against us by default, I desire to have these comments on record in your columns. As briefly as the nature of the case permits, I shall point out a few of the mistakes in that very—to say the least of it—misleading report. It says: "The present condition of Presbyterianism in the Province is not cheering. Much good has doubtless been done, but the results do not appear at all in proportion to the moneys expended in past years by the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Canada." Then it is added, as the grand reason for this state of things, that "Conflict of opinion and action on the part of individual ministers belonging to the rival Churches represented has hitherto militated against progress." That report would have been about as near the mark if it said that our want of progress—or the failure of "our Church to advance in British Columbia as it has done in other parts of the Dominion"—led to the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. I must say that we deserved something very far different from the whole tone of that very unsympathetic report, and its expressed and implied censures. Under most adverse circumstances of every kind, those ministers who have been here have, with fewer exceptions than is usual, creditably represented the Presbyterian Church, and maintained their few positions as well as the best of any others—though like them (a few of us) for many long years leading a sort of forlorn hope.

Every candid and unprejudiced man who knows anything of the history of British Columbia knows that there have been neither "progress" nor "proportionate results" here in anything, civil or ecclesiastical, on account of our very small settled population. We have had occasionally a comparatively large population, but it has been very scattered, very heterogeneous, and very migratory. A fair report would say so, if felt called upon at all to go back "on the past." Until very recently our whole—what we call—white population would not make a third or

fourth rate town in Ontario—and that scattered over hundreds of miles. Just as well might a Deputy have blamed Dr. Black at Red River for having only one congregation for so many years in all Manitoba and the North-West; or attribute the great increase of the Church there now to his removal. You cannot have churches without people; and the prosperity of any particular branch of the Church at the first depends on the character of the population and its source. (As to the character of our population, however, I think a statement in the Deputy's Report from some one is rather strong—"From all appearances the Indian population are far more anxious to be instructed than their white brethren are.") Suppose that the present population of Manitoba and the North-West had all gone from the Province of Quebec, where would our Church there be to-day? Or could any fair minded man upbraid us for want of progress there? Until I read the report commented on I never knew that the size and appearance of a place were any indication of the size of a congregation of any particular denomination that ought to be "gathered in."

2. But besides the backward and disappointing condition of the Province for so many years, there is another principal cause which has "militated" against our progress; indeed, I may say the other principal cause. Even with our very small, scattered, heterogeneous, and migratory population, our present condition would be much more "cheering" had the Parent Churches been as prompt and liberal in giving us ministers, and in supplying their places when vacated, as other denominations have been. But somehow they have been unable or unwilling to grant us the supplies needed, and repeatedly, and most urgently asked for. What are the facts? Before we had a Presbytery at all the Home Churches, and the Canadian Church refused to send a supply in the year 1866 to Pandora Street Church, Victoria; and consequently the doors of one of the finest churches in the Province were closed for some nine years, against one of the most enthusiastic and liberal congregations ever assembled; and so far as those churches were concerned they might have been closed even yet. The Canadian Church declined to supply Mr. Duff's place when he left Cariboo in 1865, though the prospects were vastly more encouraging than they are now. And after he left New Westminster in 1867 it was left vacant for about eighteen months. When Mr. Aitken left Nanaimo in 1871, that place was left unsupplied for nearly five years; a very good church was locked up, and the nucleus of a most promising congregation scattered. In reply to my repeated and urgent entreaty to send a minister, I was told that none could be got to come. In the spring of 1875 one at length consented to come for Nanaimo; and when a point of order was raised in the Synod of Toronto *ancient* his license and ordination, an influential member was reported in the "Globe" as saying, "Mr. S. would have a congregation of only forty or fifty in the field proposed, and it was a loss for him (*sic*) to expend his fine talents in such a small place." Even thus were we expected to have things "cheering." Will some one try the experiment of making things "cheerful" by shutting up a church or two in Toronto for five or nine years, and then open it again?

But, Mr. Editor, in these circumstances the Church of Scotland nobly came to our aid in the summer of 1875, upon the personal solicitation of the Rev. Mr. Macgregor, of Victoria, with a very liberal grant of money (\$5,000 a year) and four additional ministers. Victoria District, Nanaimo, Langley and Nicola (for which place I had asked for a minister some years before) were then supplied, and the prospects appeared most promising. Of course no one ever supposed then that it would have been necessary to continue the grants to those places for such a length of time. We were looking then, as we have so often looked in vain, for a large influx of population, and more prosperous times. And that there might not be even the appearance of "conflict of opinion and action," or of "rival Churches," I at once united with the Presbytery, and we had as few disputes as ever took place in any Presbytery. But very soon it was the same story with some of our ministers as with so many of other Churches—the position and prospects were too dark and discouraging, and two of our number left the Province; and (not as it was with other churches) no supplies could be obtained to fill the vacancies. And over a year ago Nanaimo was again left vacant—the church and manse closed up—and it remains so; and the minister who may come along now, or at some