

THE CHURCH IN THE COLONIES.

Missionary Report to the Presbytery of Picton.

By the Rev. George Harper, A. M. Preacher of the Gospel.

THE last report handed in to the Presbytery brought down the narrative of my labours to the first week of December, after I had returned from St. Mary's. At Rogershill, I preached on the 9th of the Month. The weather happening to be stormy and travelling bad, a great many who had to come from considerable distances were thus prevented from attending divine service; but taking everything into account the audience was tolerably good. I may here take the opportunity of mentioning that I was on the outlook, all the previous Saturday, for a man to take me to Rogershill, until at last, on Sabbath morning, I was indebted to the kindness of Mr. Daniel McKay for conveying me thither. But, as I was afterwards informed, those who would have come were not exactly sure where I was to be found. In future, better arrangements will be made, so far, at least, as I am concerned.

I need scarcely say how deeply I commiserate the destitute state of the people at Rogershill with regard to the services of the sanctuary; and I can assure them that I regret very much that I cannot preach to them the word of truth in their own tongue, and in accents dear to the heart of every genuine Highlander. But this much I feel bound to say that to the real Christian, who delights to honor his Creator, and rejoices in every opportunity of shewing forth, in the company of the brethren, the praises of Jehovah, the Gospel of the grace of God, even though it may be preached in a language which he but partially understands, is always acceptable. In regard to the future, let not the good people despair. Providence may have a good Gaelic missionary yet in store for them. It may not be out of place here to mention, that while I staid in their district I did what I could to forward this very desirable object, by writing out an application to the Colonial Committee, which I directed should be signed by a few of the leading men and forwarded to the Secretary. It was therein suggested that an advertisement for a Gaelic missionary for Rogershill, Cape John, &c. for a period of three years,—(or until the young men now educating at home are ready to enter the mission-field of this Colony), should immediately be inserted in the pages of the Home and Foreign Missionary Record of our Church, and I sincerely trust that this, which appears to be the best of all methods of obtaining the object of their wishes, may sooner or later be the means of drawing the attention of some of our young licentiates at home, to the unfortunate situation in which they are placed. I likewise intend, in a short time, writing the Committee myself, when I shall remind them of our wants in this and other quarters:—so that I hope our people will be ready to believe, in this really the case, that everything is being done which can be done to forward their spiritual interests, and that if efforts have hitherto been made it has not been for want of zeal.

In the meantime, perhaps, as the people of Rogershill, &c. after the departure of their late missionary, Mr. McKay, may feel somewhat distressed at their present position and prospect, it appears to me that it might be of service to the cause, if a member of Presbytery of Gaelic were appointed to visit them on

a week day and explain how matters really stand, encouraging them by all means to continue firm and united as a congregation until their wants can be better supplied. It must be plain to every thinking man, that no good end can possibly be served by indulging in a spirit of dissatisfaction with the present weak state of our church in this colony. For does it not bear as heavily upon the ministers as upon the people, who in every case I am sure receive their share of attention, in proportion to the means at command? Is not every one of our clergymen more anxious than another, to make up for the deficiency of labourers by increased diligence and zeal; and would not all of them, as much as any of our people, rejoice at the arrival of a fresh missionary on these shores,—an event which they are ever striving to hasten, by repeated and urgent applications for assistance to the only source whence aid is to be looked for?

However, I am very glad to have it in my power to report at least one very favourable feature in connection with this district. Regularly, on the first Monday of every month, as I am informed, the Rogershill people meet together in the church for devotional exercises in Gaelic. For this they are deserving of commendation,—it is decidedly a step in the right direction. Vital religion ought not to be allowed to languish and die among them, because they happen in the meantime to have no regular minister to watch over and care for them. What lies within their own proper sphere of duty ought not to be left undone; and the holding of a congregational prayer meeting is one of those things which they can do, and in which, I was exceedingly glad to hear, they seem to take a pious delight. Long may they continue to do so.

I should be very glad indeed if the people of other destitute districts were to imitate their example in this respect—an example so well worth copying. Are there not many, for instance, about Wallace and Pugwash, who would rejoice, if they had the opportunity presented to them of attending a monthly meeting for devotional exercises in Gaelic? I am sure many would glad to come forward for such a purpose, who would not derive a tithe of the benefit if the services were conducted in English. And equally sure I am, if it were put in their view, that there are not a few among our pious adherents in that quarter of the vineyard, who would gladly offer themselves to conduct, in rotation, divine worship in their mother tongue,—a language, as I believe, second to none in the beauty and richness of its devotional expressions. I may here state that, as in other cases, I embraced the opportunity of recommending our "Monthly Record" to the favorable notice of the people of Rogershill: and I trust there is not one man among them who can read, and who is not in absolute poverty, who will not subscribe for next year. This is another thing which all our people can easily do, if they have a mind, and if our ministers labour with so much diligence in circulating a religious periodical for the benefit of their adherents, with nothing but the reward of a good conscience for their trouble, it is surely the duty of every man who wishes well to our cause, not only to take a copy himself, but also to do all in his power to promote and extend its circulation.

Staying a few days at Back Meadows, I was conveyed over, by Mr. G. Gordon, to Cape John Church, where I preached, on Sabbath the 16th, to a numerous and attentive audience. I was delighted to see so many respectable looking people take their seats before me, al-

most all of whom are our own adherents. I was glad also to find that their church is now almost finished. The interior presents a chaste and handsome appearance, and the pulpit, which is neat and comfortable, is built in the good old style which our forefathers loved to honor, and not like some which are neither pleasing to the eye nor convenient to the preacher. I apprehend it is true, in almost every respect, both in regard to matter as well as form, that the nearer we keep to the model of the old Kirk at home, the more likely are we here, and elsewhere in the Colonies, to go on and prosper. To Mr. Peter Grant, Elder, a true friend of our church, and to the pious and talented minister of Belfast, do the people of Cape John, no less than the church at large, owe a debt of gratitude for their exertions in putting up this building, which, it is to be hoped, may be the means of great and increasing usefulness in so populous a district.

On Tuesday the 18th, I spent some hours in examining a School in the Rogershill district, taught by a young man, Mr. Duncan McDonald, an adherent of our church, from Garelough; and I was much pleased to see the progress the scholars were making under so industrious a teacher. They are all the children of Presbyterians, and answered very correctly a number of questions which I put to them from the shorter Catechism and Bible. The Schoolmaster is himself a Student, and can translate Latin very well. To the kindness of the Rev. A. Maclean, of Garelough, he tells me, he has been indebted for assisting him in the prosecution of his studies. It is pleasing to find the young men of this country, like those of the same class at home, persevering often amid hardships and difficulties in the pursuit of knowledge, and aspiring with a laudable zeal, to reach an honorable and useful position in the world. And I may here take the liberty of saying that, in the present circumstances of our church, I do not know a better scheme than one which would seek out, and educate a few of such promising young men for the ministry. Could money possibly be better bestowed, than in forwarding the great interests of the everlasting Gospel? and if one in the position of Mr. Maclean, with his hands already sufficiently full of work, still manages to find, in the midst of his arduous labours, a little time to spare to forward a young man in his studies, ought not such zeal as this, on the part of a minister, set in chiding the lukewarmness and indifference to all such matters of many of our people? Surely, if our situation as a church were viewed in its proper light, all would cheerfully contribute of their means to forward so good a cause, as the education of young men for the ministry. Under existing circumstances, it is clear that we are bound, not merely to provide for the present, but also to look forward to the future.

On the following Thursday evening, I preached a sermon in the above schoolhouse. The settlers being all presbyterians, of the Free, Secession and Established Churches, the meeting was very well attended, the small room being in fact crowded to overflowing. It is perhaps to be regretted, that a union of the three sections cannot be brought about upon a basis satisfactory to all parties. It strikes one now and then, when he sees such meetings as this, that such union, if it could be effected, would be productive of good to this country—both to ministers and people. Then, "instead of the thorn would come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier would come up the myrtle tree." This, however, seems more a question for the future than the present. Division is