

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING OF THE HOME MISSION COMMITTEE.

The semi-annual meeting of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church began its session on Tuesday, the 10th inst., in St. Andrew's Church, at 2 p. m. The Rev. Dr. Cochrane, Moderator of the General Assembly, and Convener of the Committee, occupied the chair, and the Rev. R. H. Warden, of Montreal, Secretary. The attendance of members was full. The afternoon sederunt was occupied with passing claims for mission work in Ontario and Quebec to the amount of \$10,000, and in Manitoba to the amount of \$6,000, for the past six months.

In the evening Dr. Cochrane submitted his report as deputy to the churches in British Columbia. The report is an elaborate document of eighteen pages, giving a history of the organization of the churches in the Province, with certain recommendations as to their future management. Dr. Cochrane at some length addressed the Committee, referring to important points of the report.

DR. COCHRANE'S REPORT.

After giving extract minutes of the nature of his appointment, Dr. Cochrane goes on to say :

In fulfilment of this appointment, I at once put myself in communication with the Rev. Robert Jamieson, of New Westminster, and the Rev. Mr. Stephen, Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Victoria, intimating to both the nature of my mission, and the probable time of my arrival, and also sending to each several copies of the Home Mission Report, containing the recommendations of the Committee, and, as soon as I could make the necessary arrangements, left for British Columbia, arriving there on Tuesday the 1st of August.

On my arrival in Victoria, I was met by Mr. Alex. Wilson, one of the managers of the First (or Pandora street) Congregation, and the Rev. Daniel Gamble, who is at present supplying the pulpit of said church. The Rev. Mr. Stephen was absent, having left to visit Comox. On his return the following Friday, I had an interview with him, and arranged for a more formal conference with the office bearers of St. Andrew's Church in regard to the object of my mission. No meeting of Presbytery had been called, nor did it seem practicable to have a meeting within the time of my visit, on account of the distances from Victoria and the postal arrangements. I therefore fell in with the suggestion of Mr. Stephen, to meet with the several ministers and congregations, as far as practicable, and lay the object of my visit before them.

On the Wednesday after my arrival, I conducted the regular Wednesday evening meeting in the First Church, and attended a meeting of the Elders and Managers of said congregation. On the following Sabbath I preached in the morning in St. Andrew's Church, and met with Mr. Stephen and his elders. In the evening I preached in the First Church, and on Monday held a conference with the Board of Management of St. Andrew's Church. In addition to these more formal meetings, I received from many of the members and office bearers of both churches, who called upon me, much valuable information as to the condition of our churches in British Columbia, and the urgent need of more being done for this distant but important field.

Leaving Victoria I proceeded to the Mainland, and visited New Westminster, preaching three times for Mr. Jamieson, and meeting with the office bearers of the church. Afterwards I went to Langley, Yale, Burrard Inlet, Nanaimo and Comox. I also met with Presbyterians, at certain points on the river where the boat called, who were anxious to have the Presbyterian Church send missionaries to neglected districts.

The next six pages of the Report contains an interesting and succinct history of the founding and growth of Presbyterianism in British Columbia, and of the organization of the different churches and mission stations. At present there are two churches in Victoria (the First Church and St. Andrew's Church)—New Westminster, Langley, Nanaimo and Comox—six in all. Then follows the views of the several churches and pastors, regarding the matters submitted for their consideration.

The main questions that engaged attention were these: Should there be two distinct Presbyterian Churches in British Columbia—that of the Church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, with two Presbyteries—as would now seem necessary, in the event of the present state of things continuing? If not, under what terms could consolidation be effected, mutually satisfactory to the churches now represented in British Columbia? Would the Church of Scotland's Colonial Committee continue the grants to the churches and mission stations under its care, in the event of their union with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and would the Church of Scotland approve of said union?

In all the conferences held, I stated that neither the

Church of Scotland, nor the Presbyterian Church in Canada desired in any way to change their present relations, if considered satisfactory, and that we desired that nothing should be done, apart from the cordial approval and co-operation of the Home Church.

VICTORIA.—The First or Pandora street Church now earnestly seeks admission to the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

St. Andrew's Church, up to date, has not intimated its decision. A meeting of the congregation was to be held on the 5th September for final action, and the result communicated, but, so far, nothing has been received.

NEW WESTMINSTER.—St. Andrew's Church, New Westminster, with its pastor, seeks readmission to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Mr. Jamieson's letter of transference from the Presbytery of British Columbia is herewith laid upon the table.

LANGLEY.—Rev. Mr. Dunn, the pastor, concludes his statement by saying: "If the Church of Scotland, taking into consideration the great advantages to Presbyterianism and religion, which would accrue from a union of Presbyterianism in the Province, would offer no objections and approve of the step, I have no hesitation in saying, that my people, while retaining a deep sense of gratitude to the Church of Scotland for past assistance and while soliciting a continuance of the same, would prefer an ecclesiastical connection with Canada, for such reasons as I have stated. I strongly believe that the interests of religion would be greatly promoted by union, a union of feeling and action, in the work of the Lord. The distinctive principles of the Church of Scotland, the Free Church or the United Presbyterian Church, and their points of difference, are quite unknown to many here, and seldom or never referred to."

NANAIMO.—Now vacant. The minutes of the congregational meeting, held after Dr. Cochrane's visit, conclude with the following:

"We beg, therefore, most respectfully and earnestly, to ask the Colonial Committee to renew their grant to Nanaimo, and at the same time permit us to unite ourselves with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and get a minister from there. Should this meet the approval of the Colonial Committee, we would further ask them, as speedily as possible, to communicate their decision to the Rev. Dr. Cochrane, Convener of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and arrange with him how the grant will be paid.

"It was further resolved, that in the event of the Colonial Committee notifying Dr. Cochrane, that they had agreed to renew their grant to Nanaimo, and approve of the congregation uniting with the Presbyterian Church in Canada—that Dr. Cochrane be requested to lose no time, in selecting a minister, suitable for Nanaimo, and take whatever further steps may be necessary, to our full admission into and connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

COMOX.—The Rev. B. K. McElmon, pastor of the church at Comox and adjacent stations, transmits the minutes of meetings held. At the meeting in Comox "it was moved, seconded and agreed to,—That, whereas there is every prospect of a Presbytery in connection with the Church in Canada, being set up here, in the near future, and whereas, there is no reason why there should be two distinct Presbyterian bodies, holding the same standards of doctrine and church government.

"Therefore it is resolved that, while expressing our sincere gratitude to the Church of Scotland, for their liberal aid and interest in our spiritual welfare, we think the time has now arrived, when it would be to the interests of Presbyterianism in the Province, if all our congregations were under the care of the Church in Canada, and we hereby express our willingness to be transferred to said Church, provided the Church of Scotland approves, and the grant be continued for some years."

At the meeting held at the other station, Denman Island, it was resolved "that while sincerely thanking the Church of Scotland for their liberal aid and supplying us with the means of grace, we think the time has now come, when it would be to the best interests of Presbyterianism in this Province, if all our congregations were under the care of the Church in Canada; and we hereby express our willingness to be transferred to said Church, provided it is agreeable to the Church of Scotland, and that the grant be continued for some years."

The remarks and recommendations of the Deputy, which follow, we give in full:

From the above it will be seen that two churches—the First Church of Victoria, and St. Andrew's Church, New Westminster—seek admission to the Presbyterian Church in Canada; that three churches—those of Langley, Nanaimo and Comox—express a desire to be connected with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, subject to the approval of the Church of Scotland, while St. Andrew's Church, Victoria, has made no official intimation of its views in the matter.

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 pro-

portion to the moneys expended in past years by the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Nor is there much room to hope for any change until one strong, united and harmonious working Presbytery is erected, that will take the oversight of destitute and outlying districts, and endeavour to supply them with the means of grace. The existence of two separate Presbyterian Churches in the Province, with two distinct Presbyteries, ought not for a moment to be entertained. This would simply perpetuate on a larger scale what has hitherto militated against progress in the past, involving a needless expenditure of means, and continuing a conflict of opinion and action on the part of individual ministers, belonging to the rival churches represented.

The propriety of uniting the two Presbyterian churches in the city of Victoria into one strong, influential congregation, having been mooted, and my opinion asked, I consider that in present circumstances it would be impracticable, if not indeed unwise. There is room in Victoria for the united efforts of two ministers, and as the city grows, abundant material for both churches.

But if our Church is to advance in British Columbia, as it has done in other parts of the Dominion, there must be greatly increased expenditure, which means much larger contributions to the Home Mission Fund. The Presbyterian Church in Canada cannot face the demands of British Columbia without liberal aid, not only from the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland, but the other Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain, whose members are emigrating in large numbers to the far west, and are already found in every part of this remote Province.

In addition to the localities at present occupied by missionaries, the following points ought to be provided with religious ordinances:

I. Cowichan, Saanich, and Maple Bay, on the island. In these places there are many Presbyterian families who would gladly do their utmost to aid in the support of a pastor.

II. North Arm, South Arm, Burrard Inlet, and Port Moody, on the mainland. The growing importance of the canning fisheries on the Fraser River, near the North Arm, and the milling operations and increase of population expected at Burrard Inlet and Port Moody, in connection with the Canada Pacific Railway, make it imperative upon our Church to occupy these places and give them at least a fortnightly service.

III. Yale, at the head of navigation on the Fraser River. This place is important as having the Canada Pacific Railway workshops and offices. Whether they will remain permanently there, or be moved elsewhere is as yet uncertain. The population is a very mixed one—Chinese, Indians, and whites. With the exception of a small Episcopal church, of intensely ritualistic proclivities, and that but scantily attended, there are no religious services whatever. The Sabbath is known as a day of rest, and drunkenness and licentiousness are rampant. Several Presbyterians whom I met earnestly entreated me to lay their case before the Committee. I would not recommend any permanent appointment at Yale, but if a missionary could be sent to labour for three or six months, it would determine whether there was any likelihood of a station being regularly organized.

IV. The Nicola Valley, which may be taken as a general name for a tract of country some 200 miles beyond Yale, and where Mr. Murray laboured, would require an itinerant missionary for the scattered Presbyterians over that wide territory. The following particulars of this district have been furnished me by a member of our Church resident there for years.

"From Yale to Spence's Bridge, the distance is eighty miles. From Spence's Bridge to Nicola Valley there is a distance of about sixty miles. At Nicola Valley there is a small church deeded to the Church of Scotland, occasionally used by the Methodists, but by no Presbyterian preacher since Mr. Murray left. Kamloops is about fifty miles from Nicola, and about the same distance from Cache Creek. Clinton is twenty-six miles from Cache Creek, on the Yale and Cariboo road, and 136 miles from Yale.

"Mr. Murray used to divide his services between Nicola Valley, Kamloops, Cache Creek, and Clinton. The distance between Clinton and Nicola Valley is more than 100 miles. There is no church building in these stations except Nicola. About seventy-five miles north-east from Kamloops is a settlement called Spallumcheen. There are a few Presbyterians there, but no church service. About 130 miles north of Clinton is the village of Quesnelle, with several families, but no church of any kind. The Presbyterians throughout the country are so scattered and few that it is difficult to organize a society." My informant adds: "Could the Canada Presbyterian Church do anything for the Indian population of this Province? I think from all appearances they are far more anxious to be instructed than their white brethren are, and in many instances the instruction imparted to them has produced very satisfactory results."

V. Cariboo.—A letter received since my return from