

THE GROWTH AND NEEDS
OF
WESTERN MISSIONS.

By Rev. Dr. Robertson.

At the semi-annual meeting of the H. M. Committee, stock is taken and an effort made to sum up gains and losses. Between January and September 20,000 settlers are reported to have found a home in Western Canada, and 5,000 more will join them before the season closes. About one-half of those arriving at Winnipeg are English speaking; the rest are foreigners. Almost all the English-speaking are Protestants, but a large proportion of the foreigners are adherents of the Greek and Roman Catholic churches. Many are Lutherans, some of whom are tainted with Unitarianism. The Roman Catholic Church is likely to capture the Grecians. They swooped down on a colony of 1000 near Edmonton and bagged the whole lot in a day. By such accessions they hope to recover lost prestige and political power.

Seven new lines, or extensions of old lines, of railway, are under construction, and, along these, settlements are extending, and villages springing up which form the nuclei of missions and congregations. The growth may not be rapid, but such congregations have vitality and longevity, and when mining districts are but empty holes and deserted camps, these congregations will be renewing their youth.

Fifteen new missions were organized last season in farming and ranching districts, and six more in mining and railway centres. The mining missions are situated in rock-mining districts, where large bodies of ore are found, and they have a promise of permanence.

Fifteen missions advanced to the augmented congregation stage, and, had the Augmentation Committee room for them, nearly a score more would have kept the fifteen company.

During the current year ten augmented congregations have, or will, become self-supporting. During the summer, one of these, "Revelstoke," called a pastor, and came on the list. The town has grown during the past season and the congregation shared in the growth. The people were urged to become self-supporting, they called a meeting and passed a resolution to stand alone, and at once. "Pierson" was visited, its grant last year was \$156, and with less they thought they could not maintain an ordained missionary. The needs of the H. M. work were set before them, a fresh canvass was made while their hearts were yet warm, and—they are self-supporting.

Building operations are going on in all parts of the field, and they would be brisk-

er if the Church and Manse Board could give larger help. Let me cite a few cases:

The missionary in charge wrote me: "Our church at Ponoka is not fit for service in winter without repairs; these would cost at least \$70.00. Can you get us the half of this amount? The Church and Manse Board made us a grant, but it is not enough; help a struggling station."

Another: "Can you get us a little money to help our church? The inside is finished and we must see about getting a stove and pipes, and finishing the outside. The silver and the gold are His in Whom we trust, and I feel quite strongly that if some of the wealthy people of the East, whose delight it is to give of their abundance, only knew of our need, we should get that need supplied. This is comparatively a new place. We are farming, and in business it is all trade, very little money handled. The small company belonging to our church have done well. We have a Ladies' Aid Society, organized in June—only six members—we pay 25 cents a month. We had a table at the Orangemen's dinner, July 12, and cleared \$95; \$50 of this we gave to the Building Fund, the balance and our fees we are using to buy an organ. We had a social and cleared \$10. For all this we thank God with our whole heart." The above is a woman's letter, and this extract is given to show how self-reliant and resourceful Western people are. The Church and Manse Board gave a grant, but it was not adequate, and this courageous and trustful woman asks that \$100 more may be got from some source.

Mr. Dickey wrote from Dawson that he had the refusal of a building at Eldorado for \$1500, but only for a day, that they must have a church if the work was to go on, that he raised \$100 there, and drew on me for \$400 to meet the first instalment.

In all, 25 or 26 churches and manses will be built this season in the mission field, the church and Manse Board helping by grant or loan. But the Fund should be double its present size to meet the demands.

An experiment was made last summer to place a missionary where the miners are employed. The centres of trade are sometimes 7, 8, or 10 miles from where the men are working. When towns like Nelson, Rossland, Kaslo, Sandon, etc., were starting, the same missionary could care for town and mine. But the towns have grown, the congregations have become self-supporting and demand the whole time of the ministers and they cannot walk 8 or 10 miles and ascend 1500 or 2000 ft. as often as services are needed. Nor can these hard-working men come down to service, as work goes on on Sunday as on other days, nor, for several reasons, is it desirable that they should. And yet where 400, 500 or 600