

THE NEW HEBRIDES MISSION.

ON the 15th April, 1815, the year of Waterloo, was born at Banff, Scotland, John Geddie. As the mother prayed for the life of her baby boy, during a severe illness that came to him, she vowed that if he were spared she would devote him to the Lord to preach the Gospel among the heathen. In that touching family scene, begins, to human eye, the Foreign Mission History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

His parents emigrated to Pictou, N.S., when he was but a year old. Here he grew to manhood, studying for the ministry, getting his education in the Grammar School, Academy, and Dr. McCulloch's theological classes.

Before his course was finished he had decided to devote his life to mission work among the heathen, but feared that his parents would be unwilling. At length he told them of his purpose, and rejoiced to hear, for the first time, of his mother's vow in his infancy.

The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, had no Foreign Missions. and when Mr. Geddie, was licensed, May 2nd, 1837, he accepted a call to Cavendish and New London, P.E.I., but while working zealously at home, he organized missionary societies, and sought by public addresses, the press, &c., to stir up the Church to undertake a mission to the heathen.

His efforts resulted in the Synod, that met in Pictou, July 1844, resolving by a vote of 20 to 14, to appoint a Foreign Mission Committee and collect Funds. This Synod consisted of 24 ministers and 15 elders, representing 3 Presbyteries, Truro, Pictou, and P. E. Island, and in all, about 5000 members.

Next year, 1845 the Board reported \$1000 in fund, and the Synod, by a majority of one vote, authorized the Board to select a field and appoint a missionary. The choice was then made of New Caledonia, now a French penal settlement, some 200 miles from the New Hebrides, as a field, and Rev. John Geddie as the first missionary.

With his wife, Charlotte McDonald of Antigonish, like minded with himself, he was ready to undertake the work. A little more than a year was spent in preparation, studying medicine, printing, &c., and visiting the Churches. On the 30th Nov., 1846, the designation services were held at Pictou. There was neither railway nor steamer. A "coaster" carried them in eight days to Boston, and a small American "whaler" from thence around Cape Horn in 170 days to the Sandwich Islands. From there they got passage in a trading vessel to Samoa in 23 days, where they remained for a time with the missionaries of the L.M.S.

From Samoa Rev. James Powell accompanied them in the John Williams to the New Hebrides. and after visiting different islands they settled

29th July, 1848, on Aneityum, where Mr. Powell remained with them a year to aid them in opening the mission.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE WHOLE GROUP.

It was named by Captain Cook in 1774, and consists of about 30 inhabited islands, of volcanic origin, lying 1400 miles from Australia in the South Pacific Ocean, and extending about 400 miles in an irregular line, N. W. and S. E.

They are mountainous, evergreen, beautiful, rich and fertile, yielding plentifully the cocoanut, bread fruit, banana, and other tropical fruits.

The people were very degraded, widows were strangled, human sacrifices offered, cannibalism and infanticide practised, while indescribable violence and pollution marked their daily life.

The ten principal islands, beginning at the Southern end of the group, are, Aneityum, some 15 x 20 miles, pop. 700, once 4000. Fifty miles N.W. is Tanna, 12 x 30 miles. Eighteen miles from Tanna is Erromanga, some 20 x 30 miles, pop. 2000? Sixty miles, still N.W., brings us to Fate, about the same size as Erromanga. Still onward we reach Epi and Ambrim, a little smaller than Fate. Then comes Malekula, the second largest, about 20 x 60 miles, pop. 4000; and Santo, the largest and most northerly, 40 x 70 miles, while Aurora, 7 x 30 miles, and Pentecost a little larger, lie some 50 miles to the East of Santo.

The ten next largest are Futuna, pop. 400, and Aniwa, pop. 160, both not far from Tanna, and farther north, Nguna, Emau, Mataso, Mai, Tongoa, Paama, Malo and Oba.

The other ten inhabited islands are mostly islets lying off the larger ones, and containing fifty to one hundred people.

Eight Presbyterian Churches are now at work in the group; our own Church with 4 mission families; the Free Church of Scotland with 2; the Pres. Ch. of Otago, 3; the Pres. Ch. of New Zealand, 2; and the four Presbyterian Churches in Australia, viz., N. S. Wales, 1; Victoria, 5; Tasmania, 1; South Australia, 1; in all, 18 mission families.

These Churches carry on work on eight of the ten larger islands, and five of the smaller ones, besides on several of the small islets lying near their stations.

The total population is estimated at from 50,000 to 60,000. Of these some 40,000 are within reach of the present mission agencies, so that the ground is pretty well covered.

The large number of dialects spoken requires a larger number of missionaries than if all islands spoke the same tongue.

Communication with the islands was for many years by the mission steamer, Dayspring, which made two trips yearly to Australia. Now it is by a steamer which runs between Australia and Fiji, calling at Fate in the centre of the group,