

Presbyterianism on Vancouver Island, No. 1.

PREVIOUS to the discovery of gold in the sandbars of the Fraser River, upwards of thirty years ago, this was one of the most inaccessible and least known parts of the continent, known only to that great agent and pioneer of trade and civilization in British America, the Hudson's Bay Company. Many years previous to this the Company established trading posts throughout the interior of the mainland, the north-west coast and Vancouver Island. One of the most important of these was Victoria, situated on the South Eastern point of Vancouver Island. In addition to the officers and servants usually found at its trading posts, the Company, about forty years ago, brought out a number of practical farmers and miners, settling the former in the vicinity of Victoria and sending the latter to Fort Rupert, at the north end of the island and afterwards, on the discovery of a better seam of coal, to Nanaimo. These early settlers formed the nucleus of these two important communities.

It is a somewhat curious and remarkable fact that, although Scotchmen and Presbyterians are found occupying, in such large numbers, the most prominent positions in the management of the vast business of this great trading company, that the practice has been to appoint Episcopal clergymen to minister to the spiritual wants of both its employees and colonists. This was the case on the Pacific Coast as it was in the Red River Country.

The Company's first chaplain was the Rev. Mr. Stains, who was held in high esteem by the early settlers for his earnest piety and apostolic zeal. Like the early Episcopal missionaries to Rupert's Land, he respected the conscientious convictions and perhaps prejudices of his Presbyterian parishioners. After labouring in the colony for a number of years he perished along with others by the vessel on which he was repairing to England being wrecked and going to the bottom of the Pacific. He was soon afterwards followed by the Rev. Edward Cridge, a man of like spirit. The absence of any other service than that of the Episcopal had the usual effect of leading a considerable number of Scottish and Irish Presbyterians to find a religious home in that Church, being thus, with their descendants, lost to the Church of their fathers. In spite, however, of these unfavourable conditions, a large number of the first Scottish and Irish settlers remained loyal to the

form of service and principles of the Presbyterian Church. In the year 1861, the Rev. John Hall, under commission of the Colonial Committee of the Irish Presbyterian Church, arrived in Victoria, and for four years continued to labour surrounded by many difficulties but with not little success—the present well-organized and active "First Presbyterian Church of Vancouver Island" remaining a monument of his zeal and success. Mr. Hall was followed in 1862 by the Rev. Robert Jamieson, by appointment of the Canada Presbyterian Church, who, however, proceeded to the mainland, making New Westminster the centre of his extensive field of labour.

Sometime after the arrival of Messrs Hall and Jamieson, the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland sent out the Rev. Mr. Nimmo as their first missionary. On Mr. Hall's resignation, the Rev. Thomas Somerville, a recently ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, received and accepted a call to Victoria. All the Presbyterians having united under Mr. Somerville, Mr. Nimmo was withdrawn—he continued in charge of the united congregation for upwards of a year, when circumstances arose which resulted in division and the formation of St Andrew's congregation. Mr. Somerville continued in charge until about 1870, when he returned to Scotland where he became minister of Blackfriars, Glasgow. He was succeeded by Rev. Simon McGregor, who continued in charge until 1881, when he too returned to Scotland. He was followed by Rev. R. Stephen who remained in charge until 1887. Soon after Mr. Stephen's resignation and on the reception of the congregation into connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Rev. P. McF. Macleod was called to the pastorate. Under him, St. Andrew's has enjoyed a large measure of prosperity, the congregation has been thoroughly organized in every department of work, a very handsome and commodious church erected, and a very large addition made to the membership. After the division, the history of the First Church was somewhat a chequered one. Long vacancies, frequent changes, the absence of regular presbyterial oversight, with a serious loss by fire, tested the faith and loyalty of the founders of this pioneer church severely. In 1884, Rev. Donald Fraser was inducted. Since that time the congregation has had a large measure of peace and prosperity. A debt of four or five thousand dollars has been paid, the minister's salary increased, the church enlarged to double its former capacity and greatly beautified, with a gratifying increase to the communion roll. D. McRAE.

The problem of Christian union seems likely to find its solution in the foreign field. Christians at home do not realize the wickedness of sectarianism, nor feel the need of united forces and united action, as those who are called to apologize for the divided Church in the face of perishing heathen.