

HOME MISSIONS.

At the anniversary missionary meetings held in Montreal, noticed in our last issue, Tuesday evening was devoted to Home Missions. The Rev Dr Jenkins, Moderator of the General Assembly, was in the chair, and introduced the Rev. R. N. Grant, who spoke as follows.

Mr. Chairman and Christian Friends, the resolution which I have been requested to move reads thus: "That this meeting recognizes the importance of the Home Mission work of our Church, whether regarded from a patriotic, denominational or Christian standpoint." You observe, sir, that the first thing affirmed in this resolution is that the "meeting recognises the importance of our Home Mission work." That, sir, is a right good thing for the meeting to do, and in the hope of making the recognition more vivid, more intense, more prayerful and more liberal, I propose to give a brief description of our Home Mission work. Geographically our Home Mission work is divided into two districts—the Eastern and the Western—the Eastern being composed of the Maritime Provinces, and the Western of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. About the Eastern district I have now nothing to say. The work in the Western is divided into two departments—the assisting of some eighty weak congregations, chiefly in the older parts of the country, and the supplying of 355 mission stations with gospel ordinances, mainly in the more newly settled parts. For the sake of order I will speak first of what are generally called

OUR WEAK CONGREGATIONS.

It is not meant, Mr. Chairman, that these congregations are weak in faith or that their theology is of the weak diluted kind—and I suppose my friend Principal MacVicar would say that a weak faith and a weak theology always go together—it is only meant that they are weak in numbers, and as a natural consequence weak financially. In most cases their weakness is their misfortune rather than their fault. It not unfrequently happens that a few of our people settle down in a locality in which other denominations are strong, and if ours are to have the gospel preached and ordinances dispensed by our own ministers, they must get help from localities in which the Presbyterian element is stronger. In rural districts our congregations are sometimes made weak by our people selling their lands and moving away to other parts of the country. Villages too sometimes decrease in population, and every congregation in them decreases in proportion. You can't keep people in the Church if they don't remain in the locality. The most eloquent preacher in Montreal, not even the gentleman who adorns the Moderator's chair in the Assembly, can keep a family in his church if the family moves to Toronto or London. Long vacancies sometimes make congregations weak. The people are sometimes so finical in their tastes—so very particular about the manner in which they wish to have their spiritual food served up, that they almost die from prolonged exhaustion in hearing candidates. From these and other causes congregations often become weak. In fact sometimes they dwindle and you can't very well tell why. An eloquent and genial gentleman that you Montreal people once sent to Parliament, used to illustrate in a very happy way the manner in which a certain government went out of power some fourteen or fifteen years ago. The government in question had not been defeated at the polls or beaten by an adverse vote in the house, but went out of existence in an easy quiet sort of way. Thos. Darcy McGee said its death reminded him of a citizen of Boston who went to the market one day to get some meat for the family dinner. Taking up a piece, this colloquy took place between the buyer and seller: "When was that killed?" "It never was killed." "When did it die?" "It never died." "Well, then, how on earth did it come here?" "Oh," said the man of meat, "it just a kinder gin out." Now there are some congregations about which you might say the same thing. They never died a Presbyterian congregation hardly ever dies—nobody ever killed them, but to use the Boston man's phrase they "just a kinder gin out." Now, Mr. Chairman, the question continually arises what shall we do with these congregations. In many of them there are as leal, loyal, liberal, warm-hearted Presbyterians as can be found in any of our congregations—men who believe our doctrines, love our polity, and are proud of our history as a Church. Shall we say to these people: "We know you are good Presbyterians and

devotedly attached to Presbyterian principles, but then you are few and weak. If you were rich and strong we would help you, but you know you are weak and poor and you can go elsewhere for the gospel. We don't preach the gospel to the poor in our Church." I say we may say that, Mr. Chairman, but we can't say it and live. The Church that can treat its people in that manner must die, and deserves to die. Many of our weak congregations belong to a class which deserves special notice. I mean congregations in a transition state between mission stations and self-sustaining congregations. A mission station flourishes and the people go to the Presbytery of the bounds and say, "We want a minister of our own, but we are scarcely able to support one yet; just help us a little for one year or two years, and meantime we will do our best, and at the end of that time we will be able to stand alone." Now, Mr. Chairman, I say the Church can do no better work than help such people. Some of our best congregations have been formed just in that way, and if you take away from the Church all the congregations that were once mission stations you won't leave much behind. We can't afford to give up this kind of work. Coming to what may be called our

HOME MISSION WORK PROPER,

we find according to the last statistical returns that we have 142 mission fields and 355 preaching stations, at which stations we have about 5,000 families, 5,000 communicants, and 15,000 who attend service. Does any one ask where these preaching stations are? I answer some are in British Columbia, sixty-four are in Manitoba, and forty in the Muskoka district. We have stations at Prince Arthur's Landing, Silver Islet, Sault St. Marie, Parry Sound, and all along the northern part of the settlements in Ontario until you come to the Ottawa River, as well as a considerable number of both supplemented congregations and mission stations in your own Province of Quebec. And now, Mr. Chairman, having told you where these mission fields chiefly are, let me describe in a general way

THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO WORSHIP

in these stations. Many of them are young people who have been brought up in our churches in the older parts of the country, and have gone back to make a home for themselves as their fathers did before them. Some of them are the sons and daughters of our ministers, our elders, and of leading men in our Church. These young people had too much ambition to pass all their lives at the family crib—they had too much self-respect to live on their rich maiden aunts or bachelor uncles—they had too much dignity to hang on the skirts of the member for the Riding waiting for a small office with a small salary, and if possible a smaller amount of work. Fired with a laudable ambition they struck out for themselves, and it is the duty of the Church to send the gospel after them wherever they go. There is another class found in some of these Mission Stations that have very special claims on our Church. I mean those of our people who have got worsted in the battle of life these hard years, and who have gone back to the newer parts of country to repair, if possible, their broken fortunes. Many of them were once wealthy, and perhaps occupied high places in our Church, but by fire or flood or fraud, or some other way, they lost their all and had to start life again. Money went, property next, home next, everything went but honor, and they were forced to commence the battle of life anew. It is no easy matter, Mr. Chairman, for a man to walk penniless out of the home which he earned by his industry, and in which his children were born, but I can easily imagine that it tries a good man quite as much to leave the church in which they were baptized, and in which some of them may have been born again—in which he and his often celebrated the Master's death and dying love—and along-side of which some of the family sleep until Jesus comes. If our Church, Mr. Chairman, is true to itself if it is worthy of the honoured name which it bears if it is worthy of the honoured men who bled for it in the old land and planted it in the new—it will follow those people with the gospel wherever their lot may be cast.

There is another class yet, sir, which I must mention. I mean the emigrants that are taking up our lands and making homes for themselves in Muskoka, Manitoba, and other new parts of the country. These people have special claims upon our Church, for you know, Mr. Chairman, we receive annual grants from

the parent churches, asked, I presume, and received, on the theory that we send the gospel wherever these emigrants go. Unless we do so we break faith with the churches at home. Nay, more, I venture to say that when our emigrant agents go home they assure these people that wherever they settle they can attend their own church. There never was an emigrant agent fool enough to try to bring a Scotch, or Irish, or any other Presbyterian over here without assuring him that he might attend his own church in any part of the Dominion. It won't do to say we can't afford to send the gospel wherever emigrants go. The truth is, we can't afford not to do so.

And, Mr. Chairman, let it be remembered that if the gospel is sent to the newer parts of the country at all it must be sent by the organized churches. These gentlemen who go up and down through the country, wearing slouched hats, with a lamp Bible under their arms and their hair parted in the middle, won't go into the woods and preach what they call their "new gospel." They prefer operating on old congregations in the old parts of the country, where the travelling is comfortable and the board reasonably good. The propagators of the "new gospel" don't like a pork and green tea diet. The grand old men who laid the foundations of Presbyterianism in this country could stand that sort of thing and ride on horseback or walk hundreds of miles to preach the old gospel, but the modern gentlemen who rail on the "hireling clergy" don't take kindly to rough roads and bush fare. Their zeal won't stand corduroy roads and musquitoes.

And now, Mr. Chairman, what do we ask for in connection with this Home Mission work? Without any beating about the bush, we ask

YOUR PRAYERS AND \$43,000.

Remember, we ask your prayers and your contributions together. I don't go all the length of saying we don't care for the prayers of a man who won't give his money, but I must say I am afraid the praying of a man of that kind won't do much good. "Will your riverince give me sixpence?" said a ragged little boy to an Irish priest. "No," said the priest. "Will you give me fourpence, then?" "No," was the answer. "Will you give me a penny?" Same answer still. "What will you give me, then?" said the boy. "I'll give you my prayers," said the priest. "I won't have them," said the boy, "for if they were worth a penny you wouldn't give them." The prayers of a man who asks God to bless missions but withholds his contributions are exactly like the kind described by the apostle James when he reproves men for saying to the poor, "be ye warmed and be ye clothed," but refusing the wherewithal. The heel of a good old-fashioned loaf would be worth a thousand such prayers to a hungry man.

I will not spend time telling the business men of Montreal how much money there is in \$43,000. I never saw that amount of money, and never expect to. All I have to say is, our indefatigable convener, Dr. Cochrane, than whom there is no more efficient and arduous worker in our Church, says that amount is the least we can get along with efficiently. And remember, in asking the Church for this amount we don't ask the Church to help men who don't help themselves. The theory on which all aid is given to weak congregations and mission stations is that those who are aided do their utmost not only to help themselves, but also for all the schemes of the Church.

And now, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the resolution which I have the honor to move, we appeal to you to help in this work

ON PATRIOTIC GROUNDS.

Canada has dealt kindly with the great majority of our people. There are farmers in every township in Ontario living on their own lands in comfortable, and in many cases, elegant houses, who came here poor, and would always have been poor had they remained in the old land. No doubt they worked hard for what they have, but they would have worked just as hard in the old country and never have saved anything. There are business men of large means in every city and town and village in the Dominion, who came here with no capital but their brains and their two hands, who, had they remained in the crowded centres of the old world, might never have seen themselves with sixpence. Taking it for all in all, Canada is the best poor man's country in the world. I venture to say that more men have done well in a worldly point of view in Canada, in proportion to our numbers, than