

OUR HOME MISSION FIELD.

The work before our Church in this country is a great work, and properly to accomplish it, will require not only individual energy, but a comprehensive and systematic plan of operation. To this we are steadily working our way, and every year adds something to our experience, while it removes some difficulty towards the realization of our desires.

Hitherto our Church has done but little more than supply the wants of destitute Presbyterians. We have had neither men nor means to be aggressive; we have scarcely held our own. This cannot, however, be the proper position of any Church. We must regard every unconverted sinner as the object of our solicitude and christian effort. Scotch, Irish, English, French, Dutch, American and Negro must be all alike to us. We must lay ourselves out to gather in all classes and peoples. We must have regular missions in every place where they are needed, so far as God enables us.

In new settlements where the inhabitants are still struggling with pecuniary difficulties; in localities where the Presbyterian population forms a small portion of the whole; in districts which have to a large extent lapsed into a state of utter indifference to religion, and where the work is wholly missionary,—the practical question meets us, “How are the expenses of gospel ordinances to be met?”

In the cases referred to the people either cannot, or will not, do enough. Are they then to be neglected, or are we to hand them over to other Churches, saying, “Our Presbyterianism can do nothing towards preaching the gospel to the poor or reaching the most careless”? This we cannot do. Funds then must be procured, independently of those to whom we thus seek to minister. These must either come from the Church or from an extraneous source. Much mission-work has been done in Canada by money received from Societies and Churches in Britain and the United States. But we rejoice to think that now the Methodists, the United Presbyterians and ourselves have reached a self-sustaining independence. We now receive no money for missionary purposes and we have no Clergy Reserve Fund to fall back upon. Our only hope then is in the Church. To her we are satisfied to look. To her the great Head has given the commission to preach, and to a good extent now the ability to contribute towards the preaching of the gospel among those who know not God. We have no doubt that the Church will respond when solicited in an efficient manner, and will give us what is needed for our Home Mission operations. We fully sympathise with a clause in a report laid before the United Presbyterian Church, and believe it would be found true among us also: “In nearly all the congregations a willingness was expressed to contribute freely to the Home Mission Fund, in order that the weaker congregations may be encouraged and sustained.”

We have tried to do our work by Home Mission Funds in Presbyteries; and to some extent this has been successful. This plan has the advantage of division of labour. But still there are defects in the system which in our view more than counterbalance any advantage. One of these is the necessity of having large fields unoccupied in poorer Presbyteries, while the time and energy of a labourer are given to a comparatively small and unimportant place. Another difficulty is the inequality in the labour, and in the expense required in different Presbyteries, considering the extent of their field and the circumstances of the people—an inequality which will increase and become more marked if new Presbyteries are formed. To illustrate these defects let us institute a comparison between two of our Presbyteries, as reported at the Synod of 1857—the Presbyteries of Cobourg and Montreal. We find that the Montreal Presbytery has a field in Canada