

REPORT OF SYNOD'S HOME MISSION COMMITTEE, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 1st JUNE, 1849.

In submitting the annual report of their proceedings, the Home Mission Committee beg leave to bring under the notice of the Synod the definite objects for which the Committee was appointed, the powers with which the Synod intrusted it, and the special duties which it is required to perform. On these points they are sorry to find that great misapprehension still exists in various parts of the Church; and your Committee has often been called upon, from different quarters, to exert a power with which it has not been invested, and to interfere in matters which properly and rightfully belong to the respective Presbyteries.

The following are the duties which at different periods have been assigned by the Synod to its Home Mission Committee:—

1st. To distribute such missionaries as may be at the disposal of the Church, according to the wants of the several Presbyteries—the missionaries being subject to the several Presbyteries during their residence within their respective bounds.

2nd. The Synod enjoined Presbyteries to see that an annual collection be made in all congregations within their bounds, to form a general Home Mission Fund; such collection to be remitted to the Treasurer of the Synod's Home Mission Committee. All other funds received for home missionary operations to be under the administration of Presbyteries.

3rd. The Synod enjoined Presbyteries to report what has been done within their bounds to the Secretary of the Synod's Home Mission Committee; at least four weeks before the meeting of Synod, in order that a general report embracing the whole field of the Church's home missionary operations, might be prepared and presented to the Synod.

4th. This Committee was instructed to look out for additional labourers for the home mission work in this land, and directed to correspond with other Churches regarding the existing destitution of an able Gospel ministry; and in the hope of their being able, at least for a time, to obtain the services of ministers of eminence and approved efficiency, the Committee was vested with a discretionary power to make such provision for them as circumstances may require; and they were specially authorised, in conjunction with the Sustentation board, to appoint a suitable person as agent, to visit the different stations of the Church, and correspond with Presbyteries, and generally act under the directions of the Synod's Committee. The expense of management to be defrayed out of the General Home Mission Fund.

The Committee acting on these instructions and exercising the powers with which it has been invested by the Synod, has endeavoured, to the utmost of its power, to accomplish the objects of its appointment.

The Committee has to express its deep regret, that the instructions to Presbyteries to send a report of their proceedings to the Secretary, a month before the meeting of Synod, has not even in one case been attended to. And although, by the order of the Committee, the Convener addressed a letter to the several Presbytery Clerks, urging them to attend to this duty, yet only four of them have thought meet to comply with this request; and nearly all these reports have reached the Convener within a week or ten days of the meeting of Synod. This neglect on the part of the Presbyteries, is deeply deplored by the Committee, as we are thereby unable to bring before the Church such a full and comprehensive view of the whole field of our home missionary operations as is desirable.

The Presbyteries that have sent reports, are Kingston, Cobourg, Toronto, and Hamilton. These four contiguous Presbyteries embrace a vast extent of territory, reaching from the St Lawrence to Niagara, and Lake Erie, and westward to Lake Huron and the boundaries of the Presby-

tery of London, from which Presbytery we regret no report has been received. In the Presbytery of Kingston, the field of missionary operations is said to be very extensive. There are about fifteen missionary stations which have been more or less attended to, during the past year: connected with these stations are about 350 families of Presbyterians. During the past year they have had two missionaries and two catechists; and in addition to these, during the vacation of Knox's College, they have had the services of two students in divinity. The sum collected and paid to the missionaries and catechists, is £160. This sum was contributed partly by the missionary stations, and partly by the regularly organized congregations. The report states that "regarding the fruits of their missionary operations, there seems, on the whole, to be great cause of thankfulness. The people uniformly welcomed the ministrations of the word; and we hope and pray that, being watered by the Spirit, it will yield an abundant harvest. It is further mentioned, that "during the past winter, public missionary meetings were held in each of the congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery, at which addresses were delivered, and collections taken; and we have reason to believe that they have been useful in helping to stir up and keep alive a missionary spirit among our people."

Your Committee would earnestly recommend the concluding statement of this report to the attention of the Synod. The Presbytery of Kingston has set an example to the whole Church, in the excellent arrangements they have adopted for bringing the claims of the Home Mission before all their congregations. Much good might be expected, as the result, were all the Presbyteries to follow their example.

2nd. The Presbytery of Cobourg has reported four vacant charges and eleven stations within its bounds—making, in all, 15. The vacant charges have received some measure of supply from the members of Presbytery; and the different mission stations have been placed under the care of the ministers belonging to the Presbytery, and have been visited by them as frequently as the duties connected with their own charges would permit. In this Presbytery there has only been one missionary and one catechist during the summer months. No report has been sent from this Presbytery as to the mission funds collected and expended by them, in consequence of the translation of Mr. Reid, the Clerk of Presbytery, and the books not having come into the possession of Mr. Roger, who drew up the report.

3d. The report from the Presbytery of Toronto states that the vacant stations under the care of the Presbytery, and looking to it for supply, are 31. These are spread over a wide tract of country, comprehending more than 60 settled Townships, extending from the Township of Trafalgar on Lake Ontario, to St. Vincent on Lake Huron, as its western boundary; and on the east, from the Township of Whitby on Lake Ontario, to the Township of Eldon and the region beyond, to the north. There are six ordained ministers without pastoral charges resident within the bounds of this Presbytery,—five of these connected with the College and Academy, and the sixth principally employed in the Home Mission field. During the winter months all the stations within reach of Toronto are very regularly supplied with a dispensation of the gospel ordinances, on the Sabbaths, by the Professors and Students of Knox's College. And although not within the bounds of the Toronto Presbytery, Niagara, Cobourg and Darlington were supplied chiefly from it during the College Session. In addition to the Professors and Students, the Presbytery of Toronto employed in the Home Mission field one ordained minister, a missionary from the Free Church of Scotland, for six months, and two Catechists. During last summer, they had for the whole or a part of the College vacation, eight Students—and at the close of the late College session, nine were allocated to them—so that at present, irrespective

of the Professors, they have twelve disposable labourers. The report also states that, in addition to the stations connected with our Church, the Coloured Baptist Chapel was more or less supplied with two diets of Divine Service during the winter.

There was collected during the past year, for the Home Missionary operations of this Presbytery, the sum of £250 12s. 2½d., of which £241 11s. 4½d. has been disbursed. The report mentions that this financial statement is incomplete, from the moneys contributed to the fund not being fully reported.

4th. The Convener of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbytery of Hamilton has sent in a very full report, accompanied by a schedule, shewing how the Missionaries and Catechists at the disposal of the Presbytery, were distributed from the period of the last report until the 15th of October last. From this schedule it appears that 21 stations within the bounds of this Presbytery had been supplied to some extent during that period. The Presbytery having only four or five Missionaries and Catechists at their disposal during that period, could do but little to cultivate so wide a field. A few extracts from this excellent report will, we doubt not, be interesting:—

"It will be seen that, during the period above referred to, in the large tract of country known as the Owen Sound settlements, extending from the Township of Arthur to the Sound, a distance of not less than 80 miles, and along almost the whole road thickly inhabited by a population mostly professing to be Presbyterian, there was not more than one missionary employed at the same time, while the settlement is divided into three districts, each containing several congregations or preaching stations.

"The most interesting accounts have from time to time been transmitted by the various missionaries who visited these districts, of the condition and prospects of the field: these sometimes deriving their interest from statements of the eager hungering and thirsting of the people, in some localities, after the bread and water of life, and the strenuous exertions making by them to procure for themselves the means of grace and religious instruction; and, at other times, from the sad state of ignorance and callousness, which they describe as existing in other places in regard to the things that concern the souls of men—both alike calling aloud for the exertions of the Presbytery and the Church to supply the existing destitution—lest on the one hand the willing be discouraged, and on the other, the indifferent should be sunk yet deeper in this apathy."

"The Port Dover stations, comprising four congregations, were, during the same period, supplied by Mr. John Scott, student, who laboured most devoutly and acceptably—preaching at three stations every Sabbath; and the Presbytery have to rejoice that the Lord hath apparently granted fruits from his labours."

"After the return of the Students to College, and the removal of Mr. Ball and Mr. McPherson to the bounds of the Presbytery of London, the mission field of this Presbytery was left totally destitute of any supply. The Rev. Mr. Bethune, stated missionary in Walpole, and the Rev. Thos. Wardrop, stated missionary in Flamboro' West, being the only labourers within the bounds, and these confined wholly to their assigned localities."

"In anticipation of the close of the last College session, numerous applications were given in to the Presbytery for the service of Catechists during the summer; and it was gratifying to find in several places the ardent desire to have the same students that had visited them last summer sent to them again, as shewing how much their previous services had been appreciated."

"In addition to the two stated missionaries, there are at present five Catechists labouring within the bounds of the Presbytery—one of these is to be sent to the Presbytery of Cobourg in place of the Rev. Mr. McKinnon—and other two, Mr. Scott and Mr. Ure are appointed to labour with