

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

LETTER FROM MR. J. F. SMITH.

CLINTON, B. C., Jan. 2, 1883.

Although the Presbyterian Church in Canada has not yet a material interest in this province, she may have, we hope, ere long. A few words on the condition of church matters may not at this season be inopportune. Last autumn the Moderator of the General Assembly paid a visit to the outskirts of the province and gave an account of the places where regular ministrations were established. There was quite an interest felt by many Presbyterians at his arrival in Victoria, and hopes were expressed that he would be able to visit the interior and resuscitate the flagging zeal of our scattered population. But, much to our regret, he came no further than Yale, the head of navigation on the Frazer. This is 387 miles from Cariboo. So, the vast interior was left unexplored, and by this mistake the trip to the coast did not result to our advantage, at least as yet. It was believed that Dr. Cochrane would by his influence and eloquence inspire our people to greater interest in religious ordinances. He returned and our hope has fled. In a mixed community such as prevails in this country, it is expected that a man, to preach well, must have something to say, and say that intelligently, if not eloquently, to gather around him men of all denominations. The first question is, "is he a good preacher?" and not what is his denomination, for denominationalism is not nicely defined here. The Presbyterian adherents are in a large majority throughout the interior and especially at Clinton. Yet the Methodists of Newfoundland can spare a minister to this country over the head of the great and united Presbyterian Church in Canada! The Church of Scotland, with her accustomed large-heartedness, supplied the province with four ministers. Instead of wasting talk about union the Canadian Church would show more wisdom by taking a practical view of matters and sending at least two ministers to the mainland, who should be responsible to the Canadian Church and yet deliberate in the Presbytery of British Columbia. There is no use to talk of Church union until the iron belt is stretched from Halifax to Port Moody, which I confidently expect to see accomplished in a few years. This neglect of the province by the Presbyterian Church has left the Episcopal churches of Victoria (there are three) made up of persons who were adherents of our own. At present, while the work on the railway is prosecuted with vigour and many people are coming in and settling down, there is not a single Presbyterian minister north of Yale to occupy in the name of our Church.

Among others in different sections of the country I have been asked to draw up a requi-

sition to present to the General Assembly, stating the amount that would be contributed towards the support of a minister. Now, on this point much misapprehension prevails in the minds of persons unacquainted with the country. The collection on Sabbath in the eastern provinces is largely made up of cents, while here no coin is in circulation less than ten cents, and very seldom any coin less than fifty cents finds its way into the hat. So, instead of trusting to subscription the salary of a minister will largely depend on the Sunday collection, and therefore on the ability with which he fills the pulpit. There would be no difficulty in supplementing a minister's salary provided he commanded the respect of all denominations. There is another feature of this question. The idea prevails that if this interior cannot afford to support one minister, how is it reasonable to expect it will support two? As things are at present our one clergyman makes a round of hundreds of miles, and before he returns to us eight or twelve weeks may pass away. The date of his preaching is uncertain. And yet men are asked to subscribe to this uncertainty. Granted that we in Clinton subscribe liberally, but we wish the services of our minister at least once in four weeks. Nicola Valley and other sections may claim the same. Who is to decide between us, or are we simply to contribute in proportion to the time allotted us? The interior can support two ministers more easily than one, and certainly more to the satisfaction of both people and preacher. As it is, the minister spends a large proportion of his time in the saddle, thus precluding the possibility of quiet hours for study. I would assign Clinton, Cache Creek, Spence's Bridge, Lytton, to one who should be able to supply each place with services once a fortnight. Nicola Valley and surrounding districts to another. They would thus be a mutual support to each other.

Our Sabbath School is in a flourishing condition. All the children in the place attend, to the number of seventeen. Some of them would grow up practically heathens were it not that the Sabbath is employed to teach them what we are strictly forbidden during the week. Each of them is supplied with Bibles generally at the expense of the teachers. In last May's number of the RECORD mention was made of one of our teachers, Mrs. McLellan. This excellent and devoted lady was taken from us Dec. 24th, after a short illness of four days. She died of congestion of the lungs. She supplied many of the children with nicely-bound Bibles, and in many ways contributed to their encouragement and welfare. Although she was one of those "whose voice was not heard in the street," her presence we will miss, and in our Sunday-school she left a vacancy not easily filled.