

ately as could be wished. It is only when we have the means of contrasting the state of society and religion at different and somewhat distant periods, that we are in a position to see how much good has been achieved, and how much still remains to be accomplished.

These reflections have been forcibly brought home to my mind by the perusal of a most interesting record, entitled "A Statistical Account of the Congregations within the Presbytery of Halifax, drawn up by the different clergymen and published by authority of the Synod, in the year 1837"—just twenty years ago. It is no doubt truly melancholy, to call to remembrance the strange and most unexpected and seemingly changes, which have taken place within the bounds of the Synod during that period,—events upon which no pious mind would delight to dwell. And yet, upon the whole, in the good providence of God, there is perhaps greater cause for gratitude and rejoicing than for disappointment and regret. It is to be hoped that meanwhile opportunities of religious instruction have been considerably multiplied, and weak stations and congregations increased and strengthened. It is not my province, nor do I possess sufficient information, to narrate the proceedings of other denominations during the above period. But it affords me extreme pleasure to think that the prospects of success are now becoming daily brighter and more encouraging within our own borders. A Superintendent of Missions has been regularly appointed by the Synod, whose business it is to look after and provide for the different mission stations throughout the province; and no less than two visiting missionaries are now employed in supplying the desultory stations which prevail in this Presbytery. It would be highly interesting, if any one competent to the task (and I know of no one more so than our worthy and respected Superintendent himself) were to take a calm and deliberate review of all the Congregations and stations which were once so happily united together in one presbyterial connexion. In the meantime, I shall confine myself to the state of religion twenty years ago and at present, in the districts in question, with which I have lately become acquainted.

The following is the statistical account of the number of the settlements in Musquodoboit in the year 1837, as contained in the Presbytery's abstract published at that period; and I need not say, that I shall endeavor to procure a full account of their existing religious condition and prospects, for publication in succeeding numbers of the Record.

MUSQUODOBOIT TWENTY YEARS AGO.

Musquodoboit is the Indian name, of one of the largest rivers in Nova Scotia, which rises among the Highlands in the interior of this Province, near the boundary line between the Counties of Halifax and Colchester, and after flowing with a gentle current, in a South-west direction, for more than fifty miles, falls into

the Atlantic Ocean, about ten leagues to the Eastward of Halifax Harbour. The lands on both banks of this river, near its source, and for many miles on the descending stream, are rich and fertile, and have been occupied and cultivated for a long period by an industrious and growing population, who are almost all steadfastly attached to the Presbyterian Religion. At the first settlement of this part of the Country, above fifty years ago, when the inhabitants were few in number, straitened in their circumstances, and far separated from each other, when the Country was covered with a dense and nearly an impenetrable forest, and the roads leading from one place to another, were almost impassable, when no regular Congregation could be formed, and there were no Churches erected for the Worship of God, the Presbyterians of Musquodoboit were occasionally visited like other new settlers, by zealous and labouring Ministers, connected, some of them with the Church of Scotland, and others belonging to the Secession Church, and the names of Mr. MUNROE, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. MURDOCH, and Mr. YOUNG, are still had in remembrance, and mentioned with much respect, and affection by the oldest inhabitants, who enjoyed in early life, the benefit of their public ministrations, and their private pastoral instructions and admonitions. Their visits although sometimes very hurried, and at distant intervals, were not only highly acceptable and profitable, at the time when they were made; they have been also eminently useful, in forming the character, and increasing the intelligence and Religious information, of the present active and thriving population. When the settlers increased in number, and became more independent in their circumstances, when new clearings were opened up in the forest, and new roads formed, they commenced the erection of suitable places of Worship in the Upper and Middle settlements, which are now comfortably finished; and they also engaged in the year 1814, the stated and entire services of the Rev. JOHN LAIDLAW, a Minister of the Secession Church, who has been succeeded by their present Pastor, the Rev. JOHN SPROTT, a Minister of the same Church, who officiates alternately in the Upper and Middle Settlements. These are certainly the most populous settlements in Musquodoboit, although they do not nearly comprehend all the inhabitants.

In consequence of the constant, and rapid increase of population in various districts, and for a distance of at least forty miles, on both sides of the River, a number of the settlers in Lower Musquodoboit, and around the Harbour, many of whom are either natives of Scotland, or their immediate descendants, have come forward, and sought admission into our Church, and have of late years been frequently visited, by our Ministers from Pictou and Halifax, who have both preached, and dispensed the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, amongst them. Now as this is only a new and vacant Congregation, and as the urgent necessities of the inhabitants of this district, are neither sufficiently known, nor adequately supplied, the following observations respecting their external circumstances, and moral and spiritual wants, may not be altogether unacceptable, to those who wish to see Religion flourish in this, and in all other parts of the Province.

As the settlers near the Atlantic Ocean, have never been regularly formed into one Congregation, or placed under the Pastoral charge of any fixed Clergyman, a general sketch of the character and circumstances of the inhabitants, is all that can be expected

on the present occasion. In drawing up this statistical account of the place, and the population, as respects Education and Religion, I have found it advantageous to follow the course of the River and have given a brief description of the three lowest districts, Musquodoboit Harbour, Meaghers Grant, and the Middle Settlement, the three stations which, have united together, in presenting an application for a Minister of the Church of Scotland, to be settled among them.

MUSQUODOBOIT HARBOUR.

Musquodoboit Harbour and the adjoining Harbours of Port Pezuec, to the Westward, and Jeddore, to the Eastward, are navigable entrances from the ocean, which stretch for some distance into the Country, and affords considerable facilities for fishing, and carrying on the coasting trade. The lands around these Harbours are very rocky and barren, and in some places rugged and mountainous, and here incapable of much improvement. But being situated near the mouth of a large river, in the immediate vicinity of the Ocean, and only a short distance from the populous Town of Halifax, although the soil is by no means favourable for cultivation, yet the front lots in a circuitous range, of many miles in length are all owned and occupied, by an increasing and improving population, who support themselves and their families, partly by Agriculture, partly by Lumbering, and partly by Fishing.

For a very long season after the commencement of these settlements, the inhabitants on this part of the coast were left, like the other settlers on the Eastern shores, from Halifax to Canso, in a state of great moral and spiritual destitution, having neither schools nor Churches and no means of instruction, either for the rising, or the adult population. Young persons were allowed to grow up in these harbours, in the most deplorable ignorance, the Lord's day was openly profaned, by secular employments and vain amusements, ruinous intemperance also extensively prevailed, and the poor forsaken outcasts, overlooked and forgotten, living in a great measure beyond the pale of civilized society, were fast sinking into a state of stupidity and indifference, bordering upon heathenism itself.

The complaints, and entreaties, and supplications made by these benighted settlers, for instruction and Pastoral superintendence, were of the most heart-rending description, when they were frequently compelled to bring their children 50 and 60 miles to Halifax for Baptism, and they at length attracted the attention, and awakened the sympathy of enlightened, and pious Christian Ministers. It is pleasing to know that although the means of spiritual instruction, and improvement, are still extremely scanty, and the ordinances of Religion are only occasionally dispensed, and at distant intervals, yet the good work is happily begun, and the field is now preparing for the labours of the husbandman.

Within the last few years a very striking, and beneficial change has taken place, in the character of the inhabitants along this entire line of coast. During the summer, and sometimes during the Winter months, almost all the Harbours have been carefully visited, by zealous and diligent Clergymen of different denominations, and amongst others by the Bishop of Nova Scotia himself, the doctrines of Salvation have been frequently proclaimed in the wilderness, School Houses have been erected, on those spots where the Indian lately roamed, infant Churches have been