

# The Record.

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## VANCOUVER'S ISLAND AND BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Our readers will be aware, from the brief notice of the proceedings of the Committee, of the steps which are being taken with the view of obtaining a missionary or missionaries to proceed to British Columbia. We are not aware that any appointment has been made, but those intrusted with the charge of this matter will, no doubt, use all diligence in looking out for a suitable agent or agents. With the view of laying before our readers reliable information as to the present aspect of the field at Victoria, the capital of Vancouver's Island, we give the following extract from a letter addressed by the Rev. W. F. Clarke, now a missionary in that place, to the Editor of the *Canadian Independent*.—

My Dear Brother,—You have already been apprized, doubtless, of our safe arrival at this place, on the *Sit. ultimo*. What other particulars respecting our voyage and the state of things here, may have been forwarded to you, and imparted to your readers in the shape of extracts from a letter to my father, I know not; but you will please exercise freely the prerogative of an editor, and reject any portion of this communication which would only enumber your too limited columns with repetitions.

Of our voyage, I will only now say, that it was unusually pleasant, and throughout without inconveniences and annoyances, was attended only by a moderate and tolerable share of these ills. We arrived here in good health, but of course somewhat fatigued and travel-worn.

My first feelings, on taking a survey of the new field of labour, were considerably tinged with disappointment and despondency. Victoria is a much smaller place than I expected to find it. The printed circular of the Colonial Missionary Society, enclosed to me in the letter of the Secretary, which first drew my attention to British Columbia as a field of missionary labour, contains among other statements respecting Victoria, the following: "By the latest accounts received, there were more than 5000, and probably, by this time there may be 10,000 English-speaking people." These, and other statements, were of course compiled from accounts supposed to be perfectly reliable, but over estimate and exaggeration have, in too many instances, guided inconsiderate pens. At the time of the greatest rush of population here, there may have been, of persons contemplating residence in Victoria, and persons transiently here on their way to the upper country, six or seven thousand people, but these under circumstances forbidding their being either regarded or represented as the population of the place. At present, in the absence of any actual census, the number of inhabitants is at from 1,500 to 3,000. I am inclined to

think that midway between these extreme figures is not far from correct. Most of the leading nationalities in the world being represented in the population of Victoria, it will at once seem that at present only a pent-up sphere presents itself for a Congregational Mission. The Episcopalians had a Mission here before this was known as a gold country. Most of the officials, and a large proportion of the other English inhabitants naturally attach themselves to that body which is in England, the Established Church. The Wesleyan Methodists, under the efficient administration of the Rev. Dr. Evans have already gathered a respectable congregation. A number of Presbyterians, encouraged by statements that have reached them through the press and otherwise, are on the *qui vive* of expectancy in reference to a minister of their order. I told them (*Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record* please copy,) that they will not be disappointed, but may look for a minister by every steamer, until he actually makes his appearance. Roman Catholics, English, Irish, German and French, Jews, Chinamen and others, claim each a share of the population, leaving but a small residuum accessible to us. It is further a singular and surprising circumstance, that I have not yet discovered in Victoria, a single English Congregationalist, though I have searched that place almost microscopically for such a *rara avis*. I find three American Congregationalists,—members of the Rev. Mr. Lacey's church of San Francisco, but the permanence of their stay here, is not yet settled.

Notwithstanding these and other unfavourable circumstances, I think my mission has commenced auspiciously, and I feel more inclined to "thank God and take courage," than to sit down and despond. It is impossible, as yet, to say what the destiny of this young country will be. Some predict its utter abandonment and ruin, but for myself, I have confidence in its future, and believe that it will grow, though not with the same rapidity, from obvious reasons, as California and Australia. I must not, however, take up your space with a dissertation on the country generally, but confine myself as closely as may be, to an account of my mission.

I have now preached in Victoria four Sabbaths. My congregations have been on the whole good, numbering from forty to one hundred and twenty persons. There has been the utmost order and decorum at every service, together with deep attention. A Sabbath-school was commenced on the second Sabbath, and in three weeks, has grown from twelve to thirty-one scholars. A prayer meeting has also been held three times, with an encouraging, though of course, small attendance. I have found in connection with the Sabbath-school and prayer-meeting, the advantage there is in a Missionary having a large family, and a church in his house. It gives him a nucleus of attendants, recruiters for Sunday-schools, the germ of a choir, for, of course, a minister's children always sing, beside all the moral effect of sympathy in a work for which all have made sacrifices, and are putting forth effort.

Two very serious impediments to progress have presented themselves. The first, the difficulty of procuring a suitable room for preaching. No public building could be

had gratis, and no private one could be obtained without incurring great expense, for rents here are enormously high. After diligent search and long enquiry, it was manifest that either I must relinquish, for a time, all idea of preaching anywhere, or copy apostolic example, and like Paul, preach in my own hired house. Accordingly, as the best thing that could be done, a barn-like upper room was rented at twenty-five dollars a month, a sum, the accumulation of which, would soon reach a decent Building Fund. In addition to this monthly rental, it cost about a hundred and fifty dollars in seats, desk, lamps, &c. Most of this latter outlay, however, will be of permanent utility, as the seats, desk, and lamps, are moveable property, and will do for a future lecture-room. To make this "upper-room" tolerably comfortable for winter occupancy, will involve additional expense. Already, however, the congregation has begun to do something towards self-support, in the way of a regular Sabbath collection for rental and other incidental expenses. This collection, for the three Sabbaths it has been taken up, has averaged ten dollars a Sabbath, an amount which can hardly be expected to be regularly received, although the scale of giving here, like the scale of expenditure, is large and liberal. The deacons of our Canadian Churches, will smile incredulously to be told, that you never find a copper in a collection here! In fact, there is no copper coin in circulation. Nobody thinks of giving less than "a bit" for any article of merchandize, or towards any public collection. "A bit" is either a ten-cent or *York-shilling* piece, as you or the party dealing with you, may happen to have either the one or the other at hand.

The aforesaid "upper room," is leased for six months, with the privilege of continuance for one year. Possibly, by the end of the first term, but assuredly by the end of the second, the friends of this mission in England and Canada, will see to it that we have a sanctuary of some sort. "A word to the wise," &c. Our indefatigable Wesleyan brethren, have already erected a commodious parsonage, and the basement of what will be, when completed, a large and handsome church. I am anxiously listening for the welcome instruction, "Go thou and do likewise."

The facts stated in the above letter, while they should suggest caution and prudence to our Committee, are of a nature to encourage and urge us forward in the work to which we have put our hands. We know that there a number of Presbyterians now looking to us for religious ordinances, and the knowledge of this fact should stimulate our efforts, lest hope deferred should make sick and desponding the hearts of our brethren on the shores of the Pacific. It appears from Mr. Clarke's letter that the population of Victoria is not at present nearly so numerous as it was some time ago represented to be. It is possible that exaggerated reports were given with reference to Victoria and the colony generally. But it is plain to us, that sooner or later it must be a place of great importance, commanding as it will do the commerce of China, Japan,