

In the *Glasgow Herald* of Friday, 11th instant, we observe with pleasure the announcement that the Senatus Academicus of the University of that city have conferred the degree of Doctor in Divinity on the Rev. Robert McGill, Minister of St. Paul's Church, Montreal. Dr. McGill received his Education in that University; and it must be highly gratifying both to himself and to his numerous friends here and in Western Canada, where he laboured so long and so zealously, to find that his merits are not forgotten by his Alma Mater, and are thus handsomely acknowledged.

## THE CHURCH IN THE LOWER PROVINCES.

[From the *H. and F. Missionary Record* for November.]

Letter—Rev. A. McLean to the Secretary, dated 6th September, 1853.

From the accounts which reached us some time ago, we were led to hope that ere this we should have the pleasure of seeing one or two more Gaelic preachers among us, but we have been painfully disappointed, and now we begin to fear that this year at least will pass without any addition being made to our number. We cannot but feel surprised that the licentiates of our Church should find such a difficulty in the way of offering their services for the short term of three years. We do not ask nor can we expect those, who have the prospect of extensive usefulness at Home, to make up their minds at once to a permanent settlement at this distance from their country and friends, but, considering the destitution which prevails here, and has prevailed so long, and considering likewise that those who have been, and are so destitute, are among the Church of Scotland's most devoted children, it is indeed painful that, owing to the backwardness of licentiates to respond to the appeals of your Committee, the very people, who faithfully and firmly adhered to our Church during her trials, should now, when that Church is again in a flourishing condition, be in danger of being absolutely forced to make application to other Churches in order to have their spiritual wants supplied. While knowing that the Church had difficulties to contend with at Home, they were willing to wait, and they did so patiently; but now they hear that she is prosperous, that her halls are filled as in past times, and they therefore ask with surprise—and they have some reason to do so—Why is it that they are still to so great an extent unprovided with the means of grace? The number of ministers here was last year considerably increased, but that number is still altogether inadequate to the extent of the field. In many districts it is yet the case that our people are but seldom called together to worship in the sanctuary, and in spite of our utmost efforts, while so weak in numbers, it will and must continue so. For many a long tedious year had they to complain of this. Had it always been thus with them, they would not be so painfully sensible of the nature of their condition. Had they never had regular ordinances, a sermon now and then would render them to some degree satisfied. But many of them were arrived at manhood ere they left the land of their fathers, where on every returning Sabbath they heard the solemn toll coming from the holy place to invite them up to its courts; and for some years after settling in this country the same privileges were enjoyed. To men thus brought up—thus accustomed regularly to repair to the House of God—it is not difficult to conceive with what feelings they find themselves now for a great part of the year excluded from it, and compelled to spend Sabbath after Sabbath in their lonely dwellings. The privileges which they once enjoyed, and which some of them might perhaps have slighted then, are now vividly before them, and to the extent to which they understand their preciousness to

they feel the bitterness of the change. It is in one sense true that their condition is not so to be lamented as that of those who never so regularly enjoyed the same privileges; but it is equally true that that man cannot feel who is not painfully affected at the sight of them, who once were prosperous and in the enjoyment of every comfort, now reduced to want and lying prostrate under the weight of privation and suffering. What can possibly call up the feelings of Christian sympathy if it be not done by seeing men dragged against their will from the ordinances of the Gospel,—clinging to the privileges of God's House, but their privileges torn from them,—walking in solemn sadness around their beloved Zion, where once they joyously sung praises to God, but the gates of that Zion barred against them,—adhering to the Church of their fathers with all the strength of attachment which the affection of youth, growing and maturing with every passing year, has been able to establish, and receiving at best but a doubtful reply to their heart-fetched inquiries, "When is a minister to come from Scotland to us?" Who can but grieve at such a state of things! But such, alas! is the condition of large congregations in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Oh! that we were able to gain the attention of the licentiates, who are unemployed at Home, to the condition of those people. Could we succeed in bringing their minds to dwell for a little on the matter,—could we fix their thoughts on it for just the few moments necessary to enable them to realize to some extent its painful nature, and still more painful consequences, which are too certain to need conjecture,—could we do that, then am I confident we should soon have assistance. Nova Scotia looks but small when seen in its little corner of the map of North America, and the importance and urgency of its claims may perhaps on that account have failed to enlist to a greater degree the attention of probationers; but Scotchmen are not the men to consider any country of comparatively little importance because its miles in length and breadth would make it appear so. Once here, and that error would soon be rectified. The complaint would be, not of the smallness, but of the far too great extent of the field.

To give you a minute description of all our vacancies, were I able to do it, would far exceed the limits of an ordinary letter. I am not able to do it. I have not had yet an opportunity of visiting them all. There are two or three of these vacancies, however, which I would especially bring under your notice. The first is that called the congregation of the West Branch and East River. This congregation for 17 years enjoyed the faithful ministrations of the Rev. John Macrae, now of Stornoway. For the last 9 years they have been without a pastor. Long indeed, and most trying, has been their destitution, but their attachment to the Church has continued unbroken; and, strange as it may seem, notwithstanding that their pastor, to whom they were exceedingly attached, left them, and notwithstanding the efforts made by another denomination to gain them over, they are at this day, after their ninth year of destitution is nearly completed, stronger in numbers, and certainly stronger in ability and zeal to support a minister than they were 9 years ago. They are perfectly able to guarantee a good stipend; and I have the fullest confidence in asserting that whatever amount they promise shall be punctually paid. They are now beginning to feel discontented. They say, and we cannot blame them, "We have waited patiently for 9 years, and is there still no prospect? We fear we will not get a minister from our own Church." I hope their fears are groundless; but how can we remove them? We cannot give encouragement but as we have authority for doing so. I would urge, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, the claims of this congregation on the attention of your Committee. It is one of the best congregations in this colony. In every respect it is a most desirable field for a young man. If at all qualified to be useful, he

would have the certainty of every assistance and encouragement in his work, of being comfortably maintained, and neither in the Colonies nor elsewhere might he expect a larger amount of kindness. Such a character I am enabled to give this congregation. I am not doing so from what I have seen and known of them for the last few months; I know them well. I was brought up from my youth among them, and I am intimately acquainted with every circumstance connected with them from the day they were first formed into a separate congregation. To hear of such a congregation, so long destitute of the means of grace, so earnestly, so long, but so unsuccessfully beseeching the Church of Scotland for aid,—cannot but grieve any member of that Church, who is able from his own attachment to her to sympathize with others thus situated. But, were those who must thus feel, though at the distance of 3000 miles, to mingle with their people as we do, and to listen to their complaints, while in the bitterness of their hearts they mourn over their condition and prospects, quite sure I am that, strong as are the ties which bind young men to their country and their homes, there would be found among our licentiates, not one, but many who would willingly make the sacrifice, and, as sure I feel, that never would they have cause to regret it.

Another destitute locality, which I would wish to mention, is that of Barney's River and Lochaber. These two places are a few miles distant from one another. In each of them we had a flourishing congregation before the Secession of 1843. Our Free Church brethren were then followed by the greater part of the people; and in Lochaber especially it was supposed that almost the whole had left our Church. So much was this believed to be the case that none of the deputations from the Church visited that place. Some months ago at the request of a few families resident there the Presbytery of Pictou ordered me to visit Lochaber. I was agreeably disappointed on arriving there. I found, not a few families, but a crowded church on the Sabbath, and a respectable audience on the week-days I preached among them. The Free Church minister, who is resident there, was absent on that Sabbath, and therefore I could not judge to what extent the feelings of the people inclined to the Church. I supposed the greater part might have attended from the natural curiosity to hear a stranger. A short time ago I again visited that place, and it happened that Mr. Campbell of the Free Church was that day at home. The congregation was at least as large as on the former occasion. The church was again crowded, and I was told that some from want of room were obliged to remain outside. A few among them never flinched in their attachment to the Church of their fathers, and some who left are anxious to return. Together with Barney's River, they could with very little aid, and that aid for only a very short time, support a minister; and, were they to obtain the services of a good Gaelic preacher, in a very few years, I feel assured, they would be able to form themselves into two separate congregations, and thus enjoy, as in the happy years which preceded the unfortunate Secession, the ordinances of God's house on every returning Sabbath.

The only other congregation I shall now speak of, is that of Belfast, Prince Edward Island. I cannot present the claims of this very large congregation in stronger terms than have already been done by my excellent friend, the minister of Charlotte Town; but, if I can do nothing more, I may repeat these claims, and even that may not be wholly useless. About three months ago, at the earnest request of the Rev. Mr. Snodgrass, the Presbytery desired me to visit Belfast. On the first Sabbath after my returning to the island, I preached in Charlotte Town church; and I must here first say one word to express the pleasure I derived from observing the success which has already attended the labours of Mr. Snodgrass in that congregation. Under his zealous and judicious management it has become a