

Thirtieth General Assembly

Meeting at St. John's, N.B.

The General Assembly opened in St. Andrew's church on Wednesday evening with a representative attendance of Commissioners—the Dominion being represented from Sidney in the East to the Yukon in the extreme West. Rev. Dr. Fletcher, the retiring Moderator, presided and preached an earnest and eloquent sermon from Phil. III: 13-14. The sermon was listened to with evident interest, marked as it was by the best features of Gospel preaching, fresh in its thought, hopeful in its outlook, effective in its utterance. Dr. Fletcher has by two years passed threescore and ten, but his eye is not dimmed nor his Celtic enthusiasm cooled.

"Progress in the Christian Life" was the theme of Dr. Fletcher's address. He emphasized the necessity of pressing onward. Satisfaction with the past was detrimental to Christian growth. The more earnest in mission work Christians were, the less of dissension there was. God had honored the Presbyterian Church in giving a great home mission field. Besides the Maritime Province work which was large, there were 488 mission fields in the west and 1,343 preaching stations. Ontario and Quebec were as before, but in New Ontario, there were seventy fields and nearly two hundred preaching stations. West of Lake Superior there were 312 mission fields and 1,884 preaching stations. In 1881, Manitoba and the North-West Territories had slightly more than 87,000 of a population and in 1901 there were 413,637. Immigration in the last two years was far in excess of previous years, about two hundred and fifty thousand having gone in. In the past four months of this year 37,000 had arrived. There was great work in home missions in the years to come. He greatly praised Queen's College, references to which and to its principal, the Rev. Dr. Gordon, were received with applause. Reference was also made to the recent meetings in favor of the union of Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists as an indication that the spirit of God, the spirit of love, peace and unity were creating a desire for closer fellowship and more unity in God's work. He hoped it would continue to grow and have practical results. He urged the importance of Foreign Missions work, and cited the grand success achieved in the last fifty years.

Principal Gordon, of Kingston, nominated Rev. Dr. Milligan, of Toronto, for the moderatorship, seconded by Dr. Sedgwick. Dr. Armstrong, of Ottawa, was put in nomination by Prof. Scrimger, Montreal, and seconded by Dr. Ramsay, of Ottawa. By a considerable majority, Dr. Milligan was elected, and on taking the chair was received with the utmost enthusiasm.

On motion of Judge Forbes, Rev. Dr. Fletcher was thanked for his scholarly and able gospel sermon and for the manner in which he had filled the moderator's chair. All stood while Dr. Warden read the reply of the King to the address sent him by the Assembly last year.

SECOND DAY.

The first hour this morning was taken up with devotional exercises, the Moderator reading the seventy-second Psalm, and Judge Stevens, Drs. Morrison, Mowatt and Smith offering prayer.

At eleven o'clock the Rev. David Lang,

the new pastor of St. Andrew's, introduced Mayor White to the Assembly and His Worship cordially welcomed the Assembly to St. John in a pleasant patriotic address.

Dr. Milligan, in his reply, warmly thanked the Mayor for his kind address and briefly referring to recent civic scandals in Toronto, said the Church should educate the people in these matters.

The Rev. Mr. Lang, on behalf of the Presbyterians of New Brunswick, then welcomed the delegates here and Dr. Milligan again replied.

The report on statistics, presented by Rev. Dr. Torrance, of Guelph, showed marked increase in revenue, both for ministerial support and missionary purposes, and a decrease in the amount of debt on church property. An increase of 12,000 is reported in the membership of the church. A discrepancy of nearly 200,000 between the Dominion census, which gives 800,000 Presbyterians in Canada, and the assembly's report, which accounts for only 600,000, occasioned discussion, which was continued in relation to home missions.

Judge Forbes called attention to the fact that out of over one million dollars of ministerial stipend, there is only a deficit of seven thousand for the year, over the whole Dominion, a fact which indicates the financial conscience of the congregations. The arrears reported belong largely to the home mission presbyteries.

A considerable part of the afternoon was spent on the report, touching the enlarging of the powers of synods. After defeating one vital recommendation, evicrating another, and adopting only insignificant features, the report was almost unanimously laid on the table, even though its essential points were approved by a majority of presbyteries. As members of the synod, the commissioners want the enlarged powers granted, but as members of the Assembly they defeat the proposals.

Mr. J. K. MacDonald, of Toronto, presented the report on the aged ministers' fund of the western section, and Rev. Anderson Rogers, of New Glasgow, that for the eastern section; both were encouraging and hopeful. The annuities have been increased, and the funds are on a better basis. The recommendations were adopted. A proposal to amalgamate the eastern and western funds will be considered, and probably adopted.

Home Mission Reports.

At the evening session Home Missions held the attention of the Assembly. It was a great occasion. There was a rapid review of conditions from Cape Breton to the Klondyke. Neither the Parliament of Canada nor any Provincial Legislature is in closer touch with Canadian life than is the General Assembly. The commissioners represent all localities, and with no party interest to serve their judgments are significant and important alike to the country and the church. The reports and address together touch not only the religious situation, but the social, industrial and trade conditions. The development at Sydney and other points in Nova Scotia and its subsequent history, the immigration from Europe and the United States, railway construction in the east and west, and the mining, lumbering and agriculture of all Canada were held in view in the discussion

of Home Missions. There was the ring of a robust and practical Canadianism in the addresses. The Grand Trunk Pacific was spoken of, and reference was made to the new communities that presently will start into existence along its route.

The home mission situation in the Maritime Provinces was presented by Dr. Stewart, of Dartmouth, Mr. Jack, of North Sydney, and Mr. Robertson, of Milltown. The fact of a stationary or diminishing population was emphasized. The east is losing its best to the great west, but the easterners made no complaint, for they are glad to give their families, their young ministers, and their money to build up western Canada and hold it united and loyal and Christian. The Presbyterianism of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is leaving all the west.

Home missions conditions between Quebec and Dawson City were presented by Dr. Warden. His address was that of a statesman surveying the resources and prospects of the country, the relation of home missions to the life of the people, and the political future of Canada. He reported \$114,000 of revenue, the largest ever received, and asked for \$120,000 for the current year. He urged upon the ministers their responsibility for leadership in all things that make for the betterment of Canadian life.

The report of the home mission committee, western section, showed the largest increase in the department of home missions that had ever taken place in a single year. The amount asked for at the beginning of the year was \$110,000. The church's answer to this appeal was a contribution of \$114,546. The year 1903-4 was one of remarkable development. In all 63 new mission fields were opened, which was four more than in the previous year. Five of them were within the bounds of the eastern synods, forty in the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, and eighteen in the Synod of British Columbia. Twenty-seven fields have been raised to the status of augmented charges, and five (all of them in the Manitoba Synod,) have become self-sustaining charges. The total number of fields now under the care of the committee is 488, a net increase of 31 over last year. There are in these fields 1,314 preaching stations, containing 14,487 Presbyterian families, and 15,625 members of the church in full communion. The number of communicants added during the year was 1,559. The contributions of the people for the support of ordinances among themselves exceeded the contributions of the previous year by nearly \$9,000—amounting for the year just ended to \$99,437. That sum represents an average contribution of \$6.36 per communicant, which exceeds the average contribution throughout the whole church for the past year by \$1.71.

The estimates for the coming year are as follows: Ontario and Quebec, \$29,000; Synod of Manitoba and Northwest Territories, \$24,000; Synod of British Columbia, \$17,500; work among foreigners in Synod of Manitoba and Northwest Territories, \$10,000; work among foreigners in Synod of British Columbia, \$2,500; Yukon Territory, \$4,000; travelling expenses of missionaries, \$7,000; salaries and expenses of superintendents and secretary, \$10,000; salary of Mr. T. A. Rodger and sundries, \$2,500; expenses of committee and executive, \$2,000; proportion of general expenses \$1,500; total \$120,000.

The home mission addresses by men from the various fields were inspiring. Dr. E. D. McLaren, secretary, in a brief speech told of the heroism and devotion of home mis-