

Our Home Work.

WHAT is usually called Home Mission work is divided into the two departments of Home Mission and Augmentation on this wise. A few scattered settlers have pushed their way to the far front, down by the sea, in the forest, or on the prairie, to make a home for themselves and their families, where there was homeless waste before. They have within reach no church. They would like to hear the gospel preached and are willing to do something to support it, but cannot do much. We send a catechist or missionary, he gathers the scattered settlers of a district to some kitchen or barn, or if in summer the sky may do for shelter, and preaches to them. He goes his way to another district and does the same. A number of such districts are grouped into one field and as often as he may be able the catechist gets over the field preaching to them in turn. They do what they can for his support, but as a rule need some help and such help is given from our Home Mission Fund, to which we are all asked to contribute year by year.

As new settlers come in, or the old families grow up and make new homes, the people want a settled minister of their own, and these districts or some of them are united into one and called a congregation or pastoral charge. They call a minister, he is settled as their own, and they are glad with a gladness that only those who have been in such circumstance can know. But they are not able to give quite enough to keep him, and we give them some help for a time from what is called the Augmentation Fund, which is thus just another department of Home Mission work. As the congregation gets stronger they need less help and are soon able to support themselves and in their turn help other places that were once like themselves. Every year new stations are taken up. Every year congregations become self-sustaining. Thus our church grows.

One reason for carrying on this work with vigor is that these scattered settlements, if left to themselves, will in some cases, soon fall into semi-heathenism. It is a very sad fact, but one that has been frequently witnessed in our frontier settlements, that where the people are left for a time, without regular public Sabbath worship of some kind, they are liable to become utterly careless about religion. The Sabbath unmarked by worship or any other token that it belongs to God becomes a day of pleasure or of work. Religion dies and morality with it, and the community, instead of being a strength and blessing, is a curse to the country.

Another reason for diligence in this work is that it is the only way to add to the strength of our church. In this way have been formed the larger part of the congregations that to-day make up the church. Had it not been for Home Mission work along these two lines, our church would have been a very feeble flock to-day, and if she is to be strong in future years, to wield an influence for righteousness at home, and to send many messengers of peace far hence unto the Gentiles, she must still grow by these same means. The fact that many of these people are our sons and daughters, is an additional call. We give them more or less, as we may be able, to supply their physical wants, as they leave our homes for new ones, and shall we not follow them with the gospel? Higher still is Christ's command, "Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the Gospel to *every* creature."

Yet another reason, a very important one, and yet one that is perhaps seldom considered, is that these frontier settlements contain, as a rule, the strongest bone, and sinew, and brain, and character of our country. Everything tends to this. As a rule it is the strong men and women, with strong bodies and resolute wills, ready to do and dare, and able to overcome, that move into new places, and compel the wilds to give them a home; and their children thus start in life with a heritage that is worth more to them than any inheritance of wealth could be. Then the whole training of these children tends to develop these traits. Their plain wholesome food, fresh air, absence of excitement, their free strong life, with its work, develops strong bodies; their share from childhood in the family tasks develops a strength of character that can more easily cope with difficulties in later life, in short, the men and women born and reared amid such surroundings, are those who will have the will to dare and the strength to do, and who as they leave home and go out to fight life's battle in larger spheres will win the day. The outmost, topmost branches of a tree bear the finest fruits, while that which is sheltered and hidden in the centre, is less choice; so as a rule the outmost, topmost branches, the outlying settlements of a country bear the men and women of greatest strength in every way. Both in our own country and in the neighboring republic, the strongest men, those who in large measure shape the policy and destiny of both church and state are those who have forged their way upward, each new triumph over difficulty but giving added strength for some new victory. These mission stations and small congregations contain as a rule those who are to be the foremost men of a generation hence, and if that generation is to be marked with a deep strong religious life, it must be by bringing that religion to bear upon them and their surroundings now. Let this be