

coextensive with the planet. The little sect everywhere spoken against, has developed into a church world-wide in its ramifications and activities, counting its adherents by between thirty and forty millions, and embodying in its various branches, diverse in polity but essentially one in doctrine and influence, more people than any other Protestant denomination. And among all those missions which Methodism has planted around the world, Newfoundland stands as the first. It was in 1765, that Laurence Coughlan preached the first Methodist sermon in Newfoundland. That was a year before Philip Embury preached the first Methodist sermon in New York, and laid the foundations of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, which in its branches, North and South, now forms the largest church of any in the great Republic, and the largest body of Methodists in the world. That was sixteen years before William Black began his apostolic labors in the Maritime Provinces, and a quarter of a century before William Lossee began his vast and heroic itinerating through what are now the great provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The Canadian Methodist Church of today, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, through the cities and towns and country sides of the Dominion and counting its adherents at well over a million, is the fruit of the work begun by those tireless and self-sacrificing pioneers.—

Newfoundland, then, was the first mission ground of Methodism, Harbor Grace was the first centre of Methodist preaching outside of the Three Kingdoms, and Laurence Coughlan had for his field not only all Conception Bay but the whole island from coast to coast. There was no fear of interfering with any one else's prerogatives, for there was no one to interfere with nearer than St. John's, in the one direction, where there was one solitary Anglican clergyman, and Trinity in the opposite direction, where there was another. And, indeed, there was plenty of need as well as plenty of room for such work as Coughlan had come to do. Five thousand souls around the shores of Conception Bay alone, were utterly uncared for. Eighty per cent. of them were from Dorset and Devon by birth or by descent, and, so far as can be learned, up to the time of Coughlan's coming, they had never been visited by a minister of religion. We are

told that "the Sabbath was unknown; there was no person to celebrate marriage, and marriage was lightly regarded, while oppression, violence, profanity and licentiousness were practised without any check." "Imagine any sin," said in after years a survivor of those old days, "Imagine any sin you will, and you cannot think of any thing too bad." Coughlan himself describes the state of things in language still more emphatic: "As to the gospel, they had not the least notion of it. Drinking, dancing, and gaming they were acquainted with; these they were taught by the Europeans who came annually to fish."

Coughlan was an Irishman, warm-hearted, enthusiastic, and thoroughly devoted. For ten years he had been one of John Wesley's band of preachers in England, though precisely under what circumstances, or under whose auspices he turned his steps toward Newfoundland there is no evidence to determine. But come he did, and amid his rough surroundings his preaching was so successful that before the end of 1765 he had gathered his converts into that essentially Methodist institution, a class-meeting—the first Methodist class-meeting on this side of the Atlantic. In the following year, the people petitioned the Society for The Propagation of the Gospel that he might be episcopally ordained—he had, previous to his coming, been ordained by a bishop of the Greek Church—and, as appears by the records of the Society, the petition was granted. Coughlan went to England and was ordained, returning to Newfoundland in the autumn of 1767. But ordination made no difference to either his spirit or his methods, and he continued to preach, publicly and from house to house, among the scattered settlements of Conception Bay till towards the end of 1773 when he returned to England. Such plainness of speech and such bold rebuke of sin as characterized his preaching were far from palatable to some of the more influential of his hearers. Persecution of a virulent kind was brought to bear upon the zealous Methodist clergyman. He was prosecuted before the chief court of the colony, but defeated his opponents; he was summoned to appear before the Governor, but His Excellency declared in his favor and made him a Justice of the Peace; a doctor was even engaged to poison him, but the doctor himself got converted and revealed the