

HOME MISSIONS.

(From the Free Church Record.)

CAPE BRETON.

The Rev. Isaac Mackay, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Cape Breton, is engaged in home mission work under the Synod of Nova Scotia, assisted by the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland. Last autumn, Mr. Mackay made a tour of nearly the whole island of Cape Breton, as well as some of the adjacent islands. Every traveller is interesting, if he tells us simply what he saw. Mr. Mackay does so, and we are sure that his unpretending but lively descriptions of the rugged regions where his lot is cast will be read with pleasure:—

“The combination of forests, lakes, rivers, mountains, rocks, and seas, to be met with in Cape Breton, is truly picturesque. Nor is the character of its population less interesting than that of its scenery, to the intelligent traveller who passes successively through English, Scotch, Irish, French, &c., settlements, together with some straggling Indian encampments; whilst these are again either agricultural, fishing, or mining; and, ecclesiastically, Presbyterian or Roman Catholic for the most part. Nevertheless, those features that render our island so attractive to tourists make the labors of a minister of the gospel toilsome and arduous, inasmuch as our population is necessarily sparse; whilst national and denominational distinctions are barriers no less formidable to the progress of the truth as it is in Jesus.

“During my tour I officiated at the dispensation of the sacrament at three different places, situated at considerable distances from one another, and preached, either on Sabbaths or week-days, in nearly every Presbyterian settlement of consequence on the island.

“There are several outlying seaboard places along the shores of Cape Breton, at which considerable numbers of fishermen collect during the fishing season, but whither regularly settled ministers cannot conveniently follow them with the bread of life. I visited and held divine service at the most important of these not very accessible stations.

“I spent a few days last summer on Seatarie, an island which has often been the scene of most disastrous shipwrecks. This island, which is about six miles long and from one to two miles broad, lies off the eastern side of Cape Breton, from which it is separated by a channel of about two miles in width. It is one continuous barren rock, covered with a stunted growth of dwarfish fir and crowberry heather; but it has a light-house, the keepers of which, with two or three fishermen and their families, are the only permanent human residents there. In summer, however, fishermen resort thither to prosecute the fisheries, when it becomes a seat of active, bustling life. A few days previous to my going to it a large English barge of nine hundred tons had struck, in a dense fog, on one of the many fatal sunken rocks that surround it, and become a total wreck. The sea being calm at the time, the crew betook themselves to their boats and were all saved. The visits of ministers to this sequestered isle, though few and far between, are always welcome. The superintendent and keepers of its light-house, as well as the transient fishermen there, of whom there was a considerable number at the time, gave me a right hearty welcome, and urged me to prolong my stay among them.

“I have also been in Isle Madame, which lies to the south of Cape Breton, and is separated from it by a narrow strait of about a mile in width. It contains a population of five thousand or upwards, all of whom are French, with the exception of perhaps five or six hundred. I preached at Arichat, its capital, on two Sabbaths, to a congregation numbering about sixty, the most of whom were Presbyterians. In this little town the Roman Catholics have a large cathedral, a nunnery, a convent, and a college at which students are taught for the priesthood. Their influence here is certainly great, and their zeal such as Protestants would do well to imitate.

“There have lately been opened, in Roman Catholic settlements in Cape Breton,