

## THE IMPORTANCE AND RESULTS OF HOME MISSION WORK IN CANADA.

Rev. Robt. Johnson, D.D., London, Ont.

The following is the only Canadian Paper read at the Council of the World's Presbyterian Alliance recently held in Washington, Ed.)

Mr. Chairman,

In speaking of the Home Mission work of our Canadian Church, it would seem to be still necessary to define the field of our operations and the character of the work accomplished.

The necessity of such definition was impressed upon me but recently while attending a great convention at one of the religious centres of this continent. Upon a wall of the pavilion there hung from day to day a map, indicating by a variety of colors the need of the world for the Gospel. Imagine my astonishment to find it declaring in unblushing whiteness that the whole of Canada, with the exception of a narrow strip of territory bordering on the great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, was—uninhabited territory! I could have forgiven the ignorance of the designer had he colored our rich and populous provinces in any inky blackness and called us "heathen," or even declared us "unexplored," but "uninhabited territory" created an amazement that lingered long on the borderland between indignation and amusement.

Sparse our population may be, Sir, in many parts, and for years must continue so, but in this good land which the Canadian Church is called upon to go up and possess for Christ, stretching as it does from sunny sea-girt Prince Edward Island and from Newfoundland's misty coasts across four thousand miles to where Pacific's waves lave Vancouver's shores and Klondyke's ridges hold in frosty grip the precious ore, peopled already with nigh six million souls, there is, from one extreme to the other, scarce a considerable stretch of territory, in which, from far off fishing station or from quiet agricultural settlement, from thriving hamlet or from busy mining camp, there does not come a call, a call to which no church can afford to turn an unheeding ear, a call for the Word of Life.

The work in this new land is far different in detail and method from that with which many in this Alliance are familiar, under the name of Home Missions. Here the work is not the recovery of the masses, the rescuing of the lapsed or the establishment of Missions in the centres of congested populations. It is, if I may so call it, the more inspiring and vastly more hopeful work of laying the foundations of future life that shall exclude such conditions. It is the pre-empting, in the name of the Lord, lands but newly

opened, the occupying by pioneer work of soil just now ready for tillage.

The importance of this work, I desire in the moments at my disposal, to emphasize in the light of three considerations :

First:—The boundless possibilities of the field and its evident destiny in the future.

Transcontinental railways and luxury in travel have rendered it less necessary than formerly to expatiate on the extent and resources of the West, but even yet there is room, especially in the Church, for larger appreciation of what these resources mean. That such should be necessary on the part of others, I cannot wonder at, when I remember that it is but as yesterday that Canadians themselves awoke to some appreciation of the place among the nations of the world to which Providence has evidently destined our land. And in that appreciation, the Church, I rejoice to believe, is a sharer.

Realize for a moment, if you can, the extent of this land so rapidly being peopled with tens of thousands of every race. Our land of the Lakes and the North Star possesses areas almost as great as those of entire Europe, forty times as great as those of the British Isles, and twelve times that of the Republic of France. An American writer speaking of his own land says: "Take five of the first-class powers of Europe, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Then add Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Denmark and Greece. Let some greater than Napoleon weld them into one mighty empire and you could lay it all down in the United States, west of the Hudson River, once, and again, and again,—three times."

But what say you to a land in which the great Republic itself might be set down, and from the half million square miles of territory remaining over, kingdoms might still be carved. I confess, when I speak of our broad Dominion, clasping three oceans in her embrace, I feel like the little lad in one of the schools in Chicago, who, when asked by his teacher the other day to give the boundaries of the United States, called upon his loyalty to cover his lack of exact knowledge and said, "Why, Ma'am, since the war there ain't no East, West, North, nor South, to this glorious Republic."

The resources of our land are an even more important factor in determining its destiny, and these are on a corresponding scale of magnificence with its extent. The climate is so varied that it includes that of central and southern Italy, and that also of sterile Siberia and rugged Norway. Here the Sicilian may cultivate his fruit trees and trim his vineyards, and here the hardy Finlander may follow the chase over snow-clad plain and grow the hardier grains under Summer suns.