

THE HOME WORK.

Caledonia (Nova Scotia Conference) is a domestic mission in the sense that it is not situated in Central America or Central Africa, but in the centre of Nova Scotia, about midway between the Atlantic and the Bay of Fundy, the headquarters being thirty miles from the former and forty from the latter. The nearest brother minister is thirty miles distant, and there are four about this distance away in various directions. This mission may be described as oblong, the length being twenty and the breadth ten miles. The principal industries, until within a few years, have been lumbering and farming. Four or five years ago, gold was discovered, and now it is an important mining section and has had a great influx of population. The mining camps are not located nearer than six miles to any of our churches, and if they are to be visited there must be additional travel—which was, until recently, over extremely rough roads—and additional preaching. Prior to the mining days this mission had five preaching places. There are three or four mining camps, where there should be regular preaching. The present incumbent has preached at three different camps, although it is impossible to give them regular service, as other than Sabbath service is of little value, many of the men having to work at night. At one camp it is estimated that there are a thousand people, and at another about half that number, while others have a smaller number, with a prospect of increase, and all asking for religious services. The composition of the miners may be classed as good, bad and indifferent. Of good and noble men and women there is no dearth. The indifferent form a large majority, and a few bad linger around. The present missionary, for the first year and a half of his incumbency, bent all his energies to supply not only the old but the new stations with preaching, and it was not until completely debilitated and afflicted that he was forced to take a temporary rest of ten weeks. The rest was too brief. On returning to work again a limit had to be placed upon his activities. He had tasted the luxury of preaching in mining shanties, cook-houses, lofts and unfinished school-houses, as well as by the wayside, also to people of a great variety of religious beliefs. To the learned and illiterate, to those from great American cities and the Cornish miner, to Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, all of whom listen attentively to the preached word, whether they conform their lives thereby or not.

The work far exceeds the ability of one man, except he be of the herculean type, who could preach three or four times every Sunday, visit all the week, attend three or four week-night appointments, and come fully equipped for the labor of the next Sabbath. One difficulty which prevents having another man, is the uncertainty of support, as miners are a fluctuating class. Their location being wholly dependent upon the success or failure of the mines, no definite guarantee can be obtained that another missionary could be sustained. The necessities of the case are urgent. There is, first of all, the care for souls who know the Lord, and who come from our churches to these sections; and then there is the battle against intemperance and many other vices, which seem to be an almost invariable

accompaniment of mining sections. What is to be done for the more effective preaching of the word in these new and almost uncared-for places is not yet determined. If it was for the millions of degraded people in Africa the call was made, sympathy might be aroused and help obtained; but as it is only for the hundreds of miners and their families who are not regularly supplied with Gospel privileges, the appeal will probably remain unheeded, and the missionary's zeal for God and souls will only lag when, worn and exhausted, he reaches the mission premises and seeks shelter and rest.

For novelty and variety, few missions rival this one. For active energies, few have greater demands. Whether these new fields shall be for the Methodist or other Churches must soon be decided. The present missionary strives to hold the country for God and Methodism, but he must soon depart and leave the field for, he trusts, a better and stronger man. While difficulties abound, the joy of knowing that some souls are being blessed and saved by the word of truth cheers the missionary's soul.

R. S. STEVENS.

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The Missionary Outlook

Is published monthly at the Methodist Mission Rooms, Toronto. Single copy, 40 cents per annum. Clubs of eight or more copies (separately if desired), 25 cents per copy. The Club Rate does not apply to the City of Toronto where, owing to local postage, the ordinary rate of 40 cents has to be charged.

Address orders to **REV. A. SUTHERLAND,**
Methodist Mission Rooms, Toronto.