

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH ALGOMA?

THIS is a question which, at the present time, is naturally attracting a great deal of attention. The fact that the good bishop (Dr. Sullivan) has again broken down in health leads people to inquire into the nature of the work which the Provincial Synod of the Church of England in Canada has laid upon him. What is that work? In its primary sense, it is to take charge of the mission stations in the Districts of Muskoka and Parry Sound, the most of the islands in Georgian Bay, and the territory along the northern shore of Lake Superior known as the District of Algoma. Territorially speaking, this is a task sufficiently appalling to induce some people to account readily in their own minds for the failing health of the bishop. But those who look more closely into the question easily discover that this can form no true cause for it. The missions to be visited, after all, are very few, their number, all told, being about thirty. The Bishop of Huron has over one hundred and forty parishes and missions to visit; the Bishop of Toronto about one hundred and twenty-five—indeed, all the dioceses are, as to the stations to be visited, large, with the exception of Niagara. The Dioceses of Quebec, Nova Scotia and Fredericton each cover districts of vast dimensions, yet their bishops, by no means idle men, have lived in the past to extreme old age, and the present bishops are not broken down, although they have had to travel over regions as rough, and among people sometimes as poor, as any in Algoma, and still do so. Before its subdivision, the Diocese of Toronto embraced the whole of the territory now belonging to Algoma, and all the rest of the present Province of Ontario besides. Yet Bishop Strachan, in days when there were few, if any, railway or steamboat facilities for travelling, journeyed over rough roads, and through tangled forests, living upon such fare as pioneer settlers could give him, and he lived on, rugged and strong, to extreme old age.

It cannot be, then, that the good bishop's ill-health is to be attributed to the mere performance of his episcopal duties. He can take his long trips in the palatial cars of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and in summer in his pleasant and comfortable steam yacht. He has a beautiful residence at Sault Ste. Marie, and from the nature of his work has found it convenient to reside, during the winter, generally in Toronto. His income is large—as it should be—so that, in many respects, his mind is freed from anxieties that other bishops sometimes have. We do not mean to say that the Bishop of Algoma has a bed of roses in this respect; far from it. The rough drives that he at times must take with his missionaries, from station to station, inland, and all the accessories to such journeys,

must, indeed, be trying. Yet it is only what the missionaries themselves are doing all the time; and, moreover, it is what nearly all the bishops of Canadian dioceses at times are doing, and have done. And, from the small number of stations which now in Algoma diocese are inaccessible by railway or water, the hardship is only what would be welcomed by a man so anxious as Bishop Sullivan is to spend and be spent for his Master's cause.

If, therefore, his lordship's failing health is to be traced to his duties at all, the reason must be sought for outside of any hardship which may exist in the actual performance of his episcopal duties, and this we may find in the fact that the Diocese of Algoma is a missionary diocese, for this brings with it an amount of discouragement and anxiety that other bishops do not have. Especially, it may be said, is this the case with the Diocese of Algoma; for there does not seem to be the least chance of any improvement taking place in the missions within its bounds. Most missionary bishops in our own Dominion and in the United States have had or have the pleasure of seeing villages grow into towns, and towns into cities, forests yielding to the woodman's axe, and replaced by farms and homesteads. They have seen, or see, with great pleasure, their clergy promoted to comfortable rural town or city parishes, by simply remaining faithful at their own posts of duty. This gives a bishop hope. It refreshes him as water gladdens the drooping plant.

But all this is wholly wanting in Algoma. Sault Ste. Marie, the "see city," makes no progress. It is but a village, and is saddled with a debt very much larger than itself. Port Arthur, once Algoma's most promising point, is dwindling. Fort William, it is true, through having sapped the life blood of Port Arthur, is on the increase; but there is nothing much on which it can rely for any extended growth. No point in the diocese has within it any element of growth. And this breaks the spirit of the clergy. After a few years' toil in regions rugged and rough, they seek other spheres where some hope of promotion lies before them.

And this breaks the spirit of the bishop. His best clergy leave him; missions have to be abandoned or given over to catechists, who, without university or college training, in time, from the despair of the bishop, may be advanced to holy orders, as, indeed, has already been done in the past, without the mature preparation that they ought to have.

What, then, is needed for Algoma? It needs some good, solid, prosperous territory, with thriving towns and villages, with well-to-do farmers, rejoicing in fruitful lands; and some counties of that description should be added to it. This would give it backbone and stability. Young men, fresh from college, could then be sent out into the regions of Algoma, Parry Sound, and Mus-

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