

HOW CHURCHES MAY BEST RAISE MISSIONARY FUNDS.

A great advance has, no doubt, been made in the promotion of a missionary spirit, since the time when the good minister cried out, "Rax me that Bible," that he might from it expound and vindicate the claims of Christian missions. No one now will openly ridicule missionary efforts. We presume that even Sydney Smith, were he now living, would no longer aim the arrows of his wit—we might say,—his unsanctified wit at Carey, whom he characterized as "the consecrated cobbler." Not only is the duty of engaging in missionary work generally admitted and commended, but almost every Christian Church has some special mission field, and almost every congregation does something for the advancement of the good cause.

But while we gratefully admit all this, we cannot but feel that we have not generally found out the right method of raising missionary funds. Many congregations, we believe by far the majority of our congregations, simply have a collection announced for some particular Sabbath. The day may be very unpropitious. The congregation may be unusually small, and the collection will, of course, be affected. Now, we do not disapprove of Sabbath day collections for missions. An opportunity may thus be afforded to many of throwing in their contribution, who might not be reached in any other way. And were all our members and adherents rightly disposed in regard to missions, were they all like the Corinthian Church of old, an opportunity afforded on the Lord's day might be all that was needed to collect the amount needed. But in our present state something more is required. The members and adherents must be dealt with individually, and individually appealed to on this subject. It appears to us that the best way of accomplishing this, and, at the same time, of accomplishing several other very important objects, is by the formation of congregational missionary associations. We have already in these pages recommended them, and we consider the subject as of such importance as to justify us in again pressing the matter on the attention of pastors, sessions, and congregations.

The plan of missionary associations has many advantages. When the Sabbath day collection alone is looked to, the accident of a stormy day, or a thin congregation from any cause, may make it a mere trifle, utterly unworthy of the object, and of the congregation too. But with an association, and a staff of zealous and persevering collectors, the matter is not left in the same uncertainty. If a stormy day prevent them from going their rounds now, they can set out again when the day is fair. If they miss a Church member one day, or find him unprepared, they can call again. But beyond the mere matter of funds, a missionary association has much to recommend it. It brings the congregation together in a pleasant way from time to time to have their attention directed to the great duty of missions, and the part which they have to do with reference to it. It educates the congregation in the management and superintendence of their congregational affairs. It trains young men, who, from being missionary collectors, may ere long be managers, or deacons, or elders. It quickens Christian devotedness. It calls forth personal activity.

The associations which we recommend are not cumbrous, unwieldy pieces of machinery. The organization may be of a very simple kind, calling for no unreasonable amount of trouble or sacrifice on the part of any; and we believe, not a congregation will be found where there will not be suitable agents to undertake the working part of the association.

We publish in our present number the results of one or two congregational associations in the Presbytery of Guelph. These results, are most creditable to the congregations, and most encouraging. We trust these associations may be increasingly successful, and that many others may be formed throughout the Church.