

## The Presbyterian Review.

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Toronto, March 12, 1896.

### The Financial Situation.

WE publish to-day a comparative statement of receipts for the different schemes, which we think may be justly characterized as alarming. It appears that the contributions to every scheme reported upon—Home Missions excepted—are considerably behind the amount received at the same date last year. It will be remembered that last year there was a deficit in the Home Mission Fund amounting to \$10,000, which was made up by a special effort—which special efforts are always understood to mean, that a few congregations which had already given liberally, gave as much more as was necessary to meet the deficiency. This year the special effort is wisely made in advance with the result that Home Missions are nearly \$4,000 ahead, whilst all others are behind—Foreign Missions to the extent of \$6,388.62. But the most startling revelation of this statement is this, that the total gifts up to date are less than those of last year by \$9,579.99, and that, in the presence of an enlarged work in both Home and Foreign Fields. Is there not something wrong in the Church's method of doing her work? Does it not seem as if the revenue of the Church depended too much upon special efforts, and too little upon the steady spontaneous offerings of intelligent interest and sympathetic hearts? It seems clear, notwithstanding all that is done in the way of visitation by missionaries and agents, and all the information distributed in many forms, that a sense of responsibility has not yet been awakened throughout the whole Church. This cannot be explained away by the plea of 'hard times' because a very large percentage of the Church never were accustomed to give, and when sympathies are aroused, the poorest find ways and means by which these sympathies can be expressed. How is such an awakening to be effected? It can only be through the ordinary ministrations of congregational life. Occasional visits from missionaries and others are no doubt helpful, but they can only act as tonics. The life blood of the Church must be sustained by continuous effort within each congregation, by its own workers—primarily by its own minister. We say that confidently, whilst entertaining the highest respect for the Ministry of the Presbyterian Church—who are, we believe, second to none other in Christendom. Yet

their sacred office bears with it weighty responsibilities. On them must chiefly depend the revenue as well as the general spiritual condition, and to them we must look for a correction of this, at present most discouraging state of affairs.

### Allocation Of Missionary Funds.

As in many of our stronger congregations, all missionary contributions are now put into one common fund, from which allocations are made at the end of the year to the different schemes. It is important that the committees charged with this duty should clearly understand the principles by which they ought to be guided in the distribution.

No hard and fast laws can be laid down which will determine every case, but obviously it is fitting that first of all some regard should be had to the needs of the various schemes, as indicated by the estimates of the General Assembly. These estimates furnish a very good indication of what is required to maintain the various departments of work on the scale of present operations, and also as to the amounts that can be profitably employed with the present agencies. The estimates express the judgment of the whole Church, and that is more likely to be correct than the judgment of any individual, or of any congregation, as to how much of the Church's available funds ought to be given to each.

They are, however, not intended to limit the Church's liberality, and there is no department of our work which is not capable of rapid extension if the requisit means are furnished. And therefore liberty must be frankly allowed to any congregation, especially if increasing its contributions, to determine where its increase shall go, whether to Home, French, Foreign work, or to colleges. One of the strong features of our system of having separate schemes, each with its own funds, is that it affords an opportunity to contributors, whether societies or individuals, to give effective expression to the interest they may feel in any one of them by special liberality. Those in charge of each scheme are encouraged to use every legitimate means of increasing the public interest in it, and are enabled to reap the benefit of such increased interest, knowing that in the long run they will be found to be helping the others as well. It hardly seems fair, however, or wise that any regular contributor should diminish the amount he has given previously to any scheme in order to increase the appropriation to some other. The several Committees, or Boards have a right to look for the continuance from year to year of the support formerly granted to them, if not for a positive increase. Only in that way can the work be carried on with any confidence in its permanent stability.

There is another principle of a different nature that needs to be borne in mind at the present time, and that is that congregations and Church missionary organizations of all kinds should refuse to make any grants out of their ordinary funds for missions which are not under the control of our own Church. Of course, if monies have been donated for any particular object in response to a definite appeal or otherwise, they ought to be forwarded to their intended destination, whatever that may be. But it is not right for any committee, or for those who may happen to be present at any particular meeting, to vote away to outside objects, money that has been contributed for Church purposes. It is no unusual thing for the representatives of such objects, many of which are entirely deserving, to appear in our pulpits or before our missionary meetings, and under the influ-