

AGED AND INFIRM MINISTERS' FUND.

A VIEW FOR ELDERS AND MANAGERS.

(Special Correspondence.)

One article on this subject is not likely to accomplish anything, nor one article appearing occasionally. If the Committee, or the Church, are in earnest in regard to this fund, if it has been determined to make it efficient within a reasonable time, then the Committee and the Church will require to give it more attention. My view of it is, that it should come before all the funds in the estimation of the Church, in as much as God cannot bless individuals or Churches, which allow the members of the household to be starved and dishonored, while they are lavish in sending the Gospel to those outside. The Church which justly gives her agents liberal salaries should not be satisfied to tell her worn out servants, that the doom of poverty is good enough for them. The view which I wish to present is this, and it is one I think not sufficiently considered, that these ministers have a first claim upon the whole Church, not merely a charitable one, and for this reason, apart from all others—that they are the servants of the whole Church and do work for the whole Church. From the day of their induction, they are told, and it is a point we glory in, that they are the servants of the whole Church, and from that day forward they work for Christ and for Presbyterianism. In ways too numerous to be told they serve the cause and not merely the local Church. They give up time, and engage in many labors for the sake of Christ and His Church, for which they receive no return whatever, space prohibits enlarging on this point here, though it could be copiously illustrated, how even in the remotest points the best known men are maintaining a testimony for the Church and upholding the cause of the Church. Such being the case the Church in the days of their infirmity and age should come to their help to an extent adequate to their need.

The second point is this. Ministers are under the most solemn obligation to labor only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. That is, they are to give themselves to spiritual work. They are to be economical and prudent in their outlay of course. But are they to make it an end, that when they reach the age of sixty five, they shall have a sufficient income to retire upon. If so, if they are to do this, besides educating their family and meeting all expenses upon the small salary they receive, then they must devote an amount of time and thought to financial matters that will interfere with their success as ministers. There is no man more despised, or more worthy to be despised, than the minister who makes the gain of money his chief end. Managers and elders would not like to see ministers engaged in money making schemes with a view to provide for their retirement. It will be said, this is not necessary. There are insurance societies willing to undertake all this responsibility. That is true. But how many of our ministers are utterly unable to make such payments to these societies as would meet their case. No, either say to ministers, you are free to indulge in money making, so that you may live when we cast you off, or say to them be true to your high vocation and God will so bless you and us, that we shall count it both a privilege and a duty to see that you have a mind free from anxiety in doing your work, and when it is done a sufficient provision, and an honored place in the Church.—D. D. McLeod.

CHURCHES WITHOUT A FUTURE.

We have occasionally heard it said of a church that it "has no future." It is easy enough to understand what is meant by the expression. It may live for a long time, but it will never be a great church, with large membership, commanding influence and importance, large wealth and power to do its work in a large way. It is well enough for a church to seek for this large life, and for its pastor and friends to crave for it this expanded and expanding influence. But it is evident, in the very nature of the case, that for the large proportion of churches this can not be, and the sooner it is acknowledged, and work projected on proper basis, the better it will be for all concerned.

We should be glad if every church might make a great bound forward in its work of gathering souls into the kingdom of Christ. It would be a glorious thing if every church of ten members might, during the next year, become one with a hundred members, all converted, and if each church of a hundred members might grow into a body of a thousand

Christian people. Let each church have all possible consecrated ambition to bring the whole world to Christ, and remember that this is a legitimate ambition. But because any particular church does not thus bound forward in numbers, and because it does not grow rapidly in wealth and power and influence, is no reason for growing discouraged, or for saying that it has no future.

The fact is that most of the churches do have a future. There are comparatively few that die. Most of them live. They may at certain times be weak and discouraged and decreased in numbers, but the most of them live and go on doing good work. Of course, some of them die, because of local changes; but then a great many stores and colleges and business enterprises die. Churches have a future, and are to do Christ's work in their communities so long as the Lord destines them to live.

Many churches in quiet towns and neighborhoods are no stronger or larger than they were fifty years ago. The word of God has been preached, the sacraments have been administered, the influence of the truth has been continuous in the region. People have come and gone, but the number at no time has been large, and the membership of the church has been correspondingly small. And yet from such churches have gone one young man after another to become ministers and missionaries, and to fill places of importance and distinction in the world.

We could give the names of scores of churches, never large at any time, which have given ministers and missionaries in numbers not approached by the larger and wealthier churches. It is not for nothing that these little churches live. A blessing to their own communities, they are fountains from which flow, almost perennially, streams that make glad the city of God. Many churches, too, in country region, or in down-town city neighborhood, are sending, continually, their choicest membership as contributions to other churches. They are recruiting stations, which the larger and wealthier churches might well afford, for advantages to accrue to themselves, to foster and encourage. The truth is that no church liveth to itself alone, and some which have not had much silver or gold to give have made their living contributions, liberally and with constant hand.

Let no minister think his work one that reflects upon his own ability simply because his church seems to have "no future." Let him remember that each soul to be reached by him: has a future, either of glory or of despair, and, when he gets this into his heart with sufficient clearness, he will forget that the building in which he meets with his people is not of marble and granite. Only let him do his work for Christ and for deathless souls. The years are hastening by. Soon we shall stand before Him. It will matter then not much as to the future of the church where we labored, but it will matter much as to the future of the souls which were committed to our charge—*Herald and Presbyterian.*

THE OLD STAIRS OF NEHEMIAH.

The Palestine Exploration Fund has been for some time past carrying on explorations on the south side of Jerusalem, the principal object being to determine the exact line of the old wall on that part of the town. It often chances that in seeking for some particular thing something else is found and such is frequently the case in archaeological explorations. This is what has taken place at Jerusalem. Nehemiah, in describing the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, says: "But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun, the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloam by the King's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the City of David." Dr. Bliss, who is carrying on the explorations, in a report lately received, announces a discovery which scarcely leaves a doubt but he has found the old stairs mentioned by the Prophet Nehemiah.

In the former report Dr. Bliss described an ancient gate he had come upon near the Pool of Siloam, and which was supposed to date from the time of the Empress Eudocia, but it, no doubt, was a later construction at, or near to, the same gate which had been repaired by Shallun. The stair which has been come upon consists of no less than thirty-four large, broad steps, and they descend down exactly to the pool; they indicate a line of communication with the Ophel ridge,