

just as deeply interested in the welfare of the congregation as any minister can be, and just as competent to say or to decide what is for its best interests and its highest welfare. Many a pastorate is shortened and the ministry of many an earnest servant of Christ is marred by the unwise exercise of authority on the ground that he, as a minister, and because he is the minister, is the only one who has an eye to see or a head to plan or a hand to execute what is for the interests of the congregation. His plans may be the best, his ideals the very highest; and, if it is his first charge, his enthusiasm be unbounded, his zeal fervent and unflagging. But just because he is the minister, and, that for that reason he ought to have his own way, he fails to understand that he has to deal with men and women who have minds of their own as to how the affairs of the congregation ought to be managed. He either creates a continual friction and unrest on the one hand, or leaves discouraged or disgusted, more especially with the elders whom he looks upon as standing in the way of the Lord's work, in hindering the carrying out of his plans, while at the same time had he known all, so far as they were concerned, they were simply standing between him and direct conflict with the congregation; and the root of all that deep disappointment and failure, coupled with sorrow to all parties concerned, is found in the idea that as a minister he was lord of session and congregation alike, and that he had the right therefore to do as he liked in the arranging and conduct, not only of the pastoral, but also of the temporal affairs of the congregation as well.

We are quite prepared to admit the stubbornness of congregations and the cantankerousness of elders to any reasonable or unreasonable degree, and yet venture the assertion that the fact to which we have referred lies at the root of a very great deal of the friction existing in congregations and of very many of the dissolutions of the pastoral tie at the present time. And the remedy does not lie in the direction of degrading the office of the elder, or in the restriction of the exercise of the functions of that office, but in a fuller recognition of the status of the elder on the Scriptural basis, and the demanding the fuller and less restricted exercise of the functions of that office. The fuller practical recognition of the fact that the great function of the Christian ministry is not the exercise of lordship over the session and the control of congregational affairs, but the ministry of the word, the edification of the body of Christ, and the spiritual oversight of the souls committed to his trust as a minister of the gospel and a co-presbyter with the elders of the congregation over which the Holy Ghost hath made them joint overseers.

And while I write thus I do not for a moment forget or overlook the fact that, in many of the newer portions of our Church field, and some not so new, the minister placed over them finds himself confronted with almost complete spiritual indifference or deadness, and if a session exists it has little or no sense of its duties or obligations, to say nothing of its privileges; that it is very likely as much of a hindrance as help to real spiritual progress and is quite content to let the minister enter the conflict single handed, and if he conquers they feebly approve, and if he is worsted in the unequal strife they harshly condemn. In such cases the temporal management runs parallel with the spiritual; and the minister is burdened with work that does not belong to his sphere of labor, and the reward of which is more likely to be adverse criticism than the richly deserved sympathy and thanks. The record of very many of the mission stations which have grown, and are growing to self-supporting congregations, abundantly illustrates the facts to which I am referring, revealing at the same time such an amount of unobtrusive, patient self-denial and self-denial, on the part of those engaged in that work as are worthy of the best days of the history of the Church. Let

us still maintain that the true remedy is to be found, not in the spiritual lordship of the minister over the session and congregation, but in awaking and arousing the elders of the Church as individuals and in their corporate capacity as sessions, to the dignity and responsibilities of their office, and demanding from them to their utmost individual capacity the fullest exercise of all the functions of their office, as those called by the Holy Ghost to be overseers over the flock of God.

Kirkwall.

### FOREIGN AND HOME MISSION WORK.

(Circular of Rev. R. P. MacKay.)

MR EDITOR,—The evident intention of Rev. R. P. MacKay's circular is to stimulate the interest of our young people in the foreign department of our Church work. It is not concerned with Home Missions and for this no one will blame the Foreign secretary. It was a mere mistake, as it appears, that the name of the Home Mission Committee was dragged in, so as to add weight to the authority of the circular. An unfortunate mistake, it was but one very easy for the Foreign Mission Secretary, anxious for this authority, to make. It is just a little difficult, however, to see how, with his knowledge of the Home Mission Committee, he even came to imagine that he had secured this authority, certainly his surprise must have been great, much greater than when he learned afterwards that he had been mistaken and had never really received the countenance of the Home Mission Committee nor of its convener. No one will blame the Foreign Mission Secretary for being keen about Foreign Mission work; that is his business, and in venturing to criticize the peculiar method proposed in the circular one can easily distinguish between a man and his methods. And here custom makes it necessary for me to assert my personal regard for the Foreign Mission Secretary. This I unhesitatingly do, largely however out of deference to public taste and not because I have any idea that Mr. MacKay needs any declaration of mine to assure him of my esteem. It is a physical principle not difficult to maintain that a man must see with his own eyes, and it is no less true that he may be expected to act after consideration of the facts within the range of his mental vision. Mr. MacKay has Foreign Mission eyes and his facts are Foreign Mission facts. With Dr. Cochrane Home may be expected to take the place of Foreign in the matter of both eyes and facts. Hence the Secretary of Foreign Missions sends, forth his circular and hence the Home Mission Convener takes him to task for it, and as it seems with some reason and success.

For, on many counts, the circular appears to me unwise, and how even good in intention it will be mischievous in results. The Foreign Mission Secretary deprecates the irritation arising from an antagonizing of the two great schemes. Mr. MacKay knows, as we all know perfectly well, though we do not confess it to ourselves, that this irritation exists. And it exists, too, in most unexpected quarters. We know, for instance, one or two members of the W.F.M.S. whom the mention of Home Missions makes hysterical, and whom the appearance of the tall figure of the Superintendent of Missions bowing in the background of a Foreign Mission meeting promptly renders inarticulate. I am careful to say "one or two members" and it is a very great testimony to the balance and good sense of that noble society, that it can stand such silly women as these aforesaid members; no men's society could. The W.F.M.S. needs none to defend it, and for this society I have nothing but honor and love. But the irritation exists, and will continue to exist, until these two departments of our Church work are set in their right relations to each other and until Home missionaries and their work attain their proper place in the honorable regard of the Church. This however opens the way to a

very wide question which may need to be discussed soon and which some are prepared fully to discuss in a calm and Christian and very thorough manner, but which is somewhat beyond the scope of this letter. At this point again imperious custom demands an expression of unswerving devotion to the cause of Foreign Missions, with a free use of striking adjectives. This I shall not give; for it would appear to me equivalent to an expression of allegiance to my Lord and of intelligent appreciation of His commands to me. He is an utterly deplorable man whose interpretation of "beginning at Jerusalem" leads him to camp within its walls; but no less deplorable is he whose exegesis would lead him to skip Jerusalem altogether. The Foreign Mission Secretary deprecates this "irritation," but it does seem strange that his knowledge of human nature, even as found in the churches, should not have warned him that for intensifying this irritation, lamentable as it is, no more ingenious scheme than his circular could have been devised. I say this frankly and with no fear that Mr. MacKay will misunderstand me. For any one who knows Mr. MacKay's generous heart fair-minded nature will know that an intention to irritate is impossible with him.

It is claimed that this proposed plan would prevent Young People's Societies from diverting funds from proper Church schemes. This is a worthy enough idea but Young People Societies, true to the principles of the Christian Endeavor Societies, would never fall into the error of contributing to extra-denominational schemes unapproved by the Church; their constitution forbids this. There needed not this circular to attain this end.

Another reason given in the circular for this new plan is the cultivating of a spirit of unity among the societies. This may be a good idea but it is one that appears to better advantage in the fervid atmosphere of a convention than in the cool, clear light of practical work. Besides the only unity effected by this plan would be along denominational lines and this can be achieved in other and better ways. I can see very well the place of the Christian Endeavor Society in cultivating a spirit of wider charity and unity between denominations but this of course is not referred to as a reason for the scheme of Mr. MacKay's circular. The other reasons advanced in support of this scheme are the obtaining of fuller and more exact information from fields, a consequent deepening of sympathy with the work being done, and a concentration of prayer. These are desirable results to achieve but anyone can see that this new scheme is not necessary to bring them about.

Thus it appears that whatever is good in the object sought, does not necessarily demand this proposed plan, and even if gained in this way, is gained at too great a cost. For there are serious fundamental objections to this whole scheme. I have spoken of the irritation likely to result from its adoption in any large measure by the Young People's Societies. That is utterly lamentable, but inevitable in the present conditions under which our Church work is administered. But let me speak of another objection. The Y.P.S.C.E. is an important element in our Church life, so important that anything injuring its usefulness should be carefully avoided. The central idea in the Society is the development of the spiritual life of the congregation. It exists as part of the congregation and for the congregation, and can realize its ideal only as it co-operates in fullest sympathy with the congregation. There can be no difference in opinion or in aim between the Society and the congregation without serious loss to the congregational life. The Society must be absolutely loyal to the congregation as the congregation must be absolutely loyal to the Church. The only authority that the Y.P.S.C.E. recognize is that of the Session, and the only work that can confidently claim the allegiance of the Society is that approved by the General Assembly of the Church and

adopted by the Session of the congregation. This proposal comes to the Y.P. Societies with authority neither of Assembly nor of H. M. Committee, nor, indeed, if I mistake not, of the F.M. Committee as a whole. It comes from a number of gentlemen "interested in missions." They are individually of the highest repute, but, as a body, are not known to the Church, have no authority and have no right to claim the attention of the Y.P. Societies. The answer to this will obviously be: "No authority is asserted; no claim is made; the proposal comes in the way of a suggestion only, and the Societies are free to accept or reject." This is apparently true, but only apparently. The suggestion comes from an Assembly officer of high rank, and in the name of two of our great committees, and so really appears to have a claim upon the loyalty of our Y.P. Societies. The minister and Session may rightly expect that to all schemes approved by the Assembly, their Young People will be loyal. Any other scheme may be accepted by the Session or may not, and so with the Y.P. Society. If, as may easily be the case, this proposal should be acceptable to a Y.P. Society, and not at the same time to the Session, friction would arise. The union between the C.E. Societies, may be useful and important, but if it is at the expense, in any case, of the most complete harmony between a Y.P.S.C.E. and its congregation, then, it is not good, but a great evil. The directing of the energies of the Society must be by the Church through its courts, and any control or guidance from any outside source must be resisted. On this ground, if on no other, the circular should be withdrawn. Besides, we are working far too much by societies; contributing too much by societies, and not enough by congregations as a whole. The congregation should be the society, when practicable, and the work done should be congregational and not society work.

It would be disastrous to an intelligent sympathy with the work of the Church, if the interest of the young people should be turned into one channel, to the exclusion of the other. I should consider it a foolish and wicked thing to seek to turn the minds of our young people from the study of foreign missions, but I will also say that the utmost devotion to the work of Foreign Missions cannot atone for the neglect of our own country; and I will say more, that the Foreign Mission work of a church that neglects its Home Mission work is doomed to failure. See what small help for Foreign Mission work comes from the Western States, and only because the Home Mission work in those States was neglected. Our Church may snatch at a present gain, forgetful of the future, but retribution will surely overtake her. I venture to say that if Mr. MacKay could have passed over territory in our far west from which the Superintendent and I have just returned, he would not have issued this circular in its present form. Again, I say, I am not blaming him, but I do say he does not know our Home Mission facts, facts so sad and so shameful to our Church that were they known the hearts of Christian men from Pacific to Atlantic would burn within them. Whatever may be, the case with our Foreign Mission work this is no time to be slack with our new Western country.

Whatever other work is ours, this is ours, and at our peril we neglect it. Not once, nor twice, was I asked by leading men in Britain: "How is it that with your enormous Home Mission work, you can carry on such extensive Foreign mission operations?" My answer was: "This Home work is a new work, suddenly thrust up us. Our Foreign work was undertaken before our Western country was opened up, and from it we cannot go back, nay, we must prosecute with vigor our work abroad." This answer was satisfactory. On no other ground could I have justified to the people of Scotland and Ireland the present relative proportions of our Home and Foreign work. On this topic more will be said again. Meantime I hope Mr. MacKay and those who consult with him, may see it to be wise to withdraw their proposal, at least until the General Assembly has had opportunity to pronounce upon it.

CHARLES W. GORDAN.

Wellington, B.C., Sept. 9, '95.