

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—An interesting paper entitled "*Impressions formed on re-visiting Scotland*," came too late for this number; together with some other articles, all of which will appear in our next.

The Record.

TORONTO, MARCH, 1851.

OUR HOME MISSION ONCE MORE.

The readers of the *Record* will no doubt infer from our so frequently returning to this subject, that we regard it as possessing peculiar importance. We certainly do so—and are most earnestly desirous that our whole Church were brought to entertain, thoroughly and cordially, a similar estimate of it. We are, indeed, fully persuaded—after the most mature consideration of all the bearings and circumstances of the case—that unless our Presbyteries and Sessions—our Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Members—be led to feel our Home Mission to be of all interests, beyond those immediately personal and congregational, the principal one—the one with which the advancement of the Kingdom of God, so far as we as a Church are responsibly concerned, is most closely identified—the one in which the immediate salvation of souls, and the future spiritual character and condition of this young and rapidly rising community, is most deeply implicated—we are, we say, fully persuaded, that unless our Church be generally imbued with a sense of the paramount importance of our Home Mission, and stirred up to some suitable practical course of action in behalf of it, Ichabod, may, and soon will be, inscribed upon her.

The grounds on which we hold this department of our duty as a Church, so peculiarly important and so essentially connected with our enjoyment of the Divine favor and blessing, have been set forth in our former statements. The simple and obvious facts—that a very large proportion, perhaps not less than one-half of our professed members and adherents, are destitute of stated pastors—that notwithstanding the remarkable success which has attended our Theological College, and the occasional recruits that have been sent from Scotland and Ireland, we are still quite unprepared to supply pastors to the congregations ripe for settlement—that in every section of the country there are to be found Presbyterian settlements too few as to numbers, or perhaps too recently established, and too poor to be able to maintain a regular ministry—and that the annual immigration, and the opening up of new tracts of land, is rapidly increasing this latter class of cases, and must continue to do so, year by year, for at least a century to come—these facts, taken in connection with the marked acceptance which our ministrations meet with, must satisfy any one, on the slightest reflection, that our Home Mission demands the chief place among our evangelistic undertakings—and must engage a principal share in our attention and exertions as a Church, if we would not incur the

guilt of neglecting the work manifestly assigned us by the Lord of the Harvest. But it is unnecessary to dwell on this part of the subject. The facts thus briefly adduced cannot be questioned, nor can the conclusion derived from them be gainsaid. Indeed, no one amongst us seems to have the least disposition either to question or gainsay, in the matter. All agree with one accord, that we ought to be, and must be, a Missionary Church—that is, so far as words and professions, and the approval of Home Mission reports, and the passing of Synodical acts and resolutions are concerned. But what is wanting is, a vigorous and systematic course of missionary action corresponding to these professions. We rejoice to know, that in some sections of the Church, a very satisfactory state of things exists in this respect; but we also know, that in others it is lamentably otherwise.

According to Synodical arrangements of long standing, the whole management of Home Missionary operations is devolved on Presbyteries. It is true the Synod appoints annually a general Home Mission Committee, but its only function has been, to distribute the Missionary labourers among the Presbyteries. It was indeed contemplated that this central Committee should seek out and appoint one or more ministers of enlarged experience and other suitable qualifications, to act as general Missionaries, subject to the direction of the Presbyteries which should have enjoyed their services successively, according to some equitable arrangement. But this measure, although repeatedly sanctioned by the Synod, has been successfully resisted, and for the present completely defeated, or indefinitely postponed. On the Presbyteries, therefore, now more than ever, do the charge and responsibility of this great interest rest. It is to Presbyteries, accordingly, that we must address ourselves, in seeking to promote improvement and progress in the matter. In what we now venture to say to them, while we use all plainness and faithfulness, we can honestly disclaim every feeling akin to arrogance or censoriousness, or inconsistent with the sentiment of affectionate respect.—Addressing ourselves, then, primarily and chiefly to the Presbyteries, we would respectfully enquire—

1st.—Are there any domestic missionary operations at all carried on by your Presbytery?—We should be glad to be assured that this question has no applicability to any section of the Church; but we venture to put it, because we have some recollection of its having been formally reported by one of our Presbyteries—that there was no Home Mission ground to be found within their bounds. This report made a strong impression on our mind, at the time it was first made, and this impression has never been altogether effaced. We have, of course, no doubt, that the statement was made in good faith; and we admit that such a case, however remarkable, in a country like this, is not an impossible one. But if any of our Presbyteries be in this condition, we would respectfully and earnestly press it upon them, to make a fresh, and more minute and searching survey of the bounds placed under

their oversight by the Church. Some destitute corner may have been overlooked on former occasions—or, in the course of those changes which are constantly going on in the state of our population, circumstances of religious want may have recently arisen, calling for the Presbytery's interposition. A tender, warm hearted attention to such circumstances—the very spirit of christian watchfulness and evangelistic energy, which the repeated and careful survey of their bounds implies on the part of a Presbytery—will be found conducive, in a high degree, to spiritual prosperity generally in the Presbytery itself, and throughout its bounds. But we proceed to enquire—

2ndly.—Is your Presbytery, in prosecuting its domestic missionary operations, proceeding on any fixed and well considered plan? A great deal of bustle and running to and fro, may be exhibited, and a great deal of substantial labor may be put forth, and no proportionate amount of good accomplished, if some regular system of action be not adopted and steadily followed out. The suggestions, of which we published the most important in our January number, will afford useful hints to Presbyteries, in arranging their missionary operations—it being, of course, quite competent for Presbyteries to adjust the details to their peculiar circumstances. What we wish to urge here, is simply the importance of each Presbytery deliberately framing a plan of operations, and regularly prosecuting this great department of their work accordingly. Let all be assured that, without this, no satisfaction will be experienced in the work, and no considerable progress made in it.—The whole vitality and efficiency of the work centres in this point, as will immediately appear, when we come to enquire, as we would now do, into particulars.

3rdly.—To what extent has your Presbytery made itself acquainted with its Home Mission field—that is to say—with the religious destitution existing within your bounds? Has any complete and thorough ecclesiastical survey been made of the bounds, bringing the statistics in a distinct and authentic shape under the knowledge and consideration of the Presbytery? or, we would venture to enquire, on the other hand, are there not localities within your bounds—whole townships, or even counties, it may be—of which the Presbytery knows little or nothing, not having had attention attracted thither by any considerable body of Presbyterians, actually applying for Gospel ministrations at your hands? In regard even to the more considerable and regularly acknowledged Mission Stations, let us also take the liberty of asking—is your Presbytery's information full and accurate, and recorded in such a form as to be readily accessible and intelligible to any one desirous of ascertaining the condition of these stations? Do you know the number of families, of members in full communion—of adherents—the average attendance on public worship—the number of Sabbath Schools and Scholars at each of your regular stations? Have you ascertained, with anything like distinctness, the territorial limits over which the parties connecting themselves with the several