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HOME MISSIONS.

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For the Review.

WHILE nearly every congregation and individual in the Church have considerable knowledge of the Foreign Mission work and the difficulties and discouragements which beset the missionary's path, still comparatively few know much of Home Mission work in our own great North-West, and of the difficulties and discouragements with which the missionary has, there, to contend. THE PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW and the W.F.M.S. have done much to educate the people in Foreign Mission work. This is well and we should be thankful for it. But the people, and even many of our ministers in the East, need educating as to the wants of the West and the difficulties there to be met. Hitherto this burden has fallen mainly on Dr. Robertson and he has grappled earnestly with it, but from modesty or some other equally good reason the missionaries themselves have refrained from saying much about their own difficulties. However, as a missionary, I shall at present disregard the unwritten custom and venture to bring before the readers of the REVIEW some of the difficulties and discouragements with which the missionaries have to contend.

One of the first difficulties and by no means the least, is the hitherto insoluble problem of how to make one dollar salary pay two dollars expense and still save a little surplus for a rainy day. In many parts of the West, two dollars are no better than one dollar in the East, consequently \$900 here is no better than \$450 in the East, except that one has the pleasure of handling it, and even this vanishes when one's note is in the bank at 24%. But in very many cases the salary falls considerably below that figure. The people may be willing to supplement the Home Mission grant to that amount, but with bad markets and a failure in crops, it is simply impossible for them to do so, and the missionary must endeavor to content himself with what he gets and measure his coat by his cloth. So as to introduce nothing personal I shall illustrate by the case of a fellow-missionary. He came to his present field several years ago and, to begin, had to spend several hundred dollars in securing a travelling outfit. During these years, he never, till last year received a salary of \$800. His house rent alone cost \$150 per annum. For a portion of the time he was cook, housemaid, and servant all combined in himself, in order to save expenses and make both ends meet. During the rest of the time he has taken table board at one of the hotels at \$6 a week no other place being available, but still lodging in his own "shack." Add to this, at about the same rate as his board, expenses of keeping a house, clothing, travelling expenses to and from Presbytery, (over 100 miles) and various other items which an eastern minister escapes and you can form an idea of how much would be left out of a salary of \$650 or \$700 per annum. During all this time he lit the fires in his own church, swept the floor and cleaned the lamps—all this in order to get along. How much more comfortable might he have been in a small congregation in one of the older provinces, yet frequently we hear men in these provinces cry to cut down the Home Mission grants. His, I believe, is no very exceptional case, consequently I do not think that the western missionary can be accused of indolence or extravagance.

Another great difficulty arises from the scattered nature of many of the settlements, the long drives between stations and the severity of the climate in winter making these drives not only disagreeable but even dangerous.

Still another difficulty, and perhaps the most discouraging, is the lack of interest shown by many of the people in the higher things of life. The foreign missionary meets heathen on heathen soil, but the home missionary meets them on civilized soil. Many of the people have been so long on the outskirts of civilization that the more the missionary leaves them alone the better they like him. He requires to visit them and, as the western man says, "rustle them out" to Church every week and even then he may be unable to accomplish his object. Of course it must not be understood that the people are all of that character, though I fear the majority of them are.

During the last meeting of the General Assembly, a recommendation was presented by the Home Mission Committee to the effect that all graduating students and ministers applying from other Churches be requested to give at least one year's service in a mission field before being eligible for a call. This object was no doubt good, but, an external law usually has very little force unless supported by an internal law. It would no doubt be most beneficial both to the students and the Home Mission cause, should the recommendation be followed voluntarily. But would it not have a good influence if the members of the Home Mission Committee and other members of our Church who never did such work, would lead the way in this, and show an example by obtaining leave of absence for three or six months and coming out to some of our destitute fields in the West during the summer or particularly the winter. Every year quite a number of our ministers spend several months holidays restoring energy in Muskoka, at the sea side or, on a trip to Europe. Now, if they would spend their holidays for one or two years in a western mission field, and ride on a "bucking broncho," from fifteen to forty miles every Sunday and several times during the week, I think that the rocking might prove as beneficial as a sea voyage, and the bracing atmosphere as a Muskoka tonic. Of course, to obtain a knowledge of mission work in the West it is not sufficient to travel along the C.P.R. and remain for a few days at Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. To see it in all its variety one must go back from the railroad from fifty to two hundred miles. In this way, a knowledge of the needs, discouragements and difficulties of mission work in the West can be obtained as in no other way, and a good example shown to graduating students and ministers from other Churches. I do not see that well organized congregations in the country towns or cities would suffer much from such a course, particularly during the winter when other supply could be obtained. In cities like Toronto and Montreal where congregations and ministers are almost crowding on one another, if two or three ministers would volunteer such work for a few months, surely their fellow clergymen, students and theological professors would see that their congregations suffered in no way.

This, of course, might not be a very pleasant experiment for those who enjoy pleasant congregations and comfortable homes in eastern towns and cities, but it would have the merit of giving them a practical knowledge of the needs and difficulties of mission work in the West, and of relieving Dr. Robertson of much difficulty and anxiety in securing winter supply for destitute fields.