

Communications.

OUR HOME MISSION WORK.

To the Editor of the Canada Presbyterian Record.

SIR,—I am glad that you have opened your columns, for the temperate and brotherly discussion of various matters which are intimately connected with the welfare of "our Zion." It would be very distressing, if this could not be done, in a manner becoming christians, and christians intimately associated in ecclesiastical fellowship. In all such bodies as ours, there will be considerable diversity of opinion on certain points, but the more frankly such diversity of opinion is brought out, so much the greater likelihood of coming to a harmonious and judicious course of action.

In connection with the Home Mission scheme, it seems to me, that a rather important preliminary question ought in the first place to be settled. We have got to such a stage in our history as a church, that there ought to be a marked distinction made between supplying vacant congregations and strictly missionary appointments; yet, practically, I am not aware that any such distinction is observed. If a congregation is in a fit state to call and to support a minister, it ought also to be able to meet all its liabilities for supply of preaching. But if it is in such a state, then it requires preachers to be sent to it, simply that it may, with as much expedition as possible, select one from among them as pastor. To appoint, accordingly, a preacher to such a vacant congregation for two or three months, would be unfair to all parties. It would prevent the congregation hearing a sufficiently large number of candidates, and it might happen that it would prevent a preacher, during the time of his probation, even occupying the pulpit of a congregation that might be in a fit state to call. But while this class of congregations will always be increasingly numerous, and ought, as far as possible, to be supplied with another preacher every three or four weeks, there are others that may be looked upon as strictly missionary stations, which need to be fostered by one being settled among them for five or six months; and, as they may be supposed not well able at first to meet their pecuniary engagements, assisted generously and kindly, but not in such a way as to cramp their own energies, by the church at large. As a preliminary, then, to any scheme of action, this distinction should be made and kept in each Presbytery; so that in sending to the Committee for Distribution of Preachers, the demands for the next three or six months, it might in each case be distinctly specified how many preachers were required for *ordinary supply*, and how many for mission work. In this way, with a very little care on the part of the Committee, the preachers might have all about an equal amount of both kinds of labour during the year. It would be absurdly unfair to a preacher, who may have for months been supplying Mission Stations, none of which were in a fit state to call a minister, to send him into a presbytery which may not have a single vacancy, in the technical sense of the term, within its bounds, while other preachers may have been supplying such vacancies all the time. Unless, however, this is in every case specified, the Committee of Distribution must be working in the dark, and may, all unwittingly, do worthy brethren and congregations grave injustice. Having made this very necessary distinction (which has not been made yet), another vitally important preliminary would need to be established. It is very evident that strictly missionary fields would be much more efficiently cultivated, and brought to such a measure of strength as to be able to meet all their engagements, much sooner by having pastors settled in them, than by any amount of mere missionary service from preachers for a few months. Are we to say that such districts are removed from the strictly *missionary* department so soon as they are provided with pastors, and are to look for no more assistance *ab extra*? To