

"ECONOMIST" ON HOME MISSION WORK.

MR. EDITOR,—Your columns of the issue of April 5 contained a letter signed "Economist," containing suggestions for the better working of missions in the North-West. If my memory is not at fault, I replied to a similar communication not very long ago. But lest any reader, or friend of Home Missions should imagine that the Assembly's Committee are reckless, or unwise in the administration of their trust, I venture, at the risk of repeating myself, to make a few plain statements of fact.

With very many of your correspondent's suggestions, I am in sympathy. If, as he alleges, greater economy can be exercised in the administration of Home Mission and Augmentation Funds in the North-West, and the same, or greater efficiency be maintained in the prosecution of our work, by all means let us have it. Every member of the Home Mission Committee is willing to do his utmost for this end, consistent with a true regard to the reasonable maintenance of our ministers and missionaries.

I am certain that "Economist" does not regard the stipends paid our labourers in the North-West as extravagant. Taking into account the expense of living in the North-West, they are in many cases poorly paid, while in others, through the poverty or indifference of the people, they do not always receive the minimum which the Church has fixed. In only one direction, it seems to me, can a saving of funds be possibly effected, namely by abolishing entirely the Synodical Committee of the North-West, and the office of Superintendent of Missions. I take it, that this is what your correspondent means (why should he not say so?) in his last paragraph, which is as follows: "Return to a purely Presbyterian regime in the North-West. It is the most economical, as also the most efficient form of administration. Whatever reasons may have existed in the past for the system now in use, there can be no defensible ones adduced for its continuance. The growth of the work is largely internal, i.e. by the reduction and re-organization of old and large congregations. With such a large number of settled pastors and efficient missionaries engaged in the Church's work, and the telegraph and railway touching the limits of almost every congregation, much of the extraordinary administration and its consequent expenditure might be profitably dispensed with, at least in Manitoba."

Now, as regards the Synodical Committee, the expenses of its maintenance have been very materially reduced during the present year. Formerly all moneys for the different Presbyteries in the North-West were transmitted through this committee, necessitating the payment of a secretary-treasurer, and other incidental expenses in Winnipeg. But by the act of last Assembly all moneys are now sent direct to the Presbyteries, as is done in the older Provinces, leaving to the committee simply the work of revising and judging of the applications and claims sent up by Presbyteries before they are sent to the Home Mission Committee in Toronto. The expenses of the members of this Synodical Committee must be paid. If the General Assembly see fit, it can still further reduce its functions or blot it out of existence.

The appointment of Mission Superintendent in Manitoba and the North-West was the act of Assembly. I am almost ashamed to repeat this so often. It did not so much as originate in the Home Mission Committee. At the General Assembly held in Kingston in 1881, the Manitoba missionaries present pleaded for the appointment, and in deference to their opinion it was made. If the Assembly thinks "Economist" does, that there are no longer "defensible reasons" for the continuance of this office, and that the pastors and missionaries in the North-West can without "extraordinary administration," and "its consequent expenditure," carry on the work so energetically begun and prosecuted during the past seven years, it certainly will curtail expenses in this direction. So far the Presbyteries and Synod of the North-West have been anything but united in their opinion on this matter. If we may judge from the discussion that took place in the Assembly at Hamilton in 1886, a large number deprecate any change in the present mode of administration. But in any case, surely it is better to have this question come up in proper form to the General Assembly, than to continue desultory discussion in our papers, when it is almost impossible for the most guarded writer to avoid per-

sonal references, and create a wrong feeling towards faithful and laborious servants of the Church.

I agree very much with what "Economist" says, that, "only Presbyteries should have power to take the initiative in organizing new fields." But practically this is the rule at present. No mission station can be organized, nor congregation erected, without the approval and sanction of the Presbytery. While I have felt that the work in the North-West has at times been too rapidly pushed (not as regards its needs, but our means), I fear that the work of exploring and supervising new fields is still too great for the ministers in the North-West Presbyteries. If, however, they can successfully undertake it, and can get the Assembly to adopt their views, certainly the Home Mission Committee will not object.

There is much to commend in the suggestions of "Economist" regarding the giving of supply to new fields, for the first year only, in the summer season. But on the other hand, the statistics of last winter's work in the North-West show that the stations have been more regularly supplied with Gospel ordinances than those in Ontario and Quebec. This again is a matter under the direct control of Presbyteries. We surely cannot imagine that missionaries were employed and paid, where there were few or no people to hear them.

Most gladly would the committee utilize "lay help" in the North-West. Indeed I may freely say that we feel that in many districts, where ordained missionaries are at present employed, our work could be sustained equally well by catechists, under the supervision and direction of the Presbyteries, or nearest ordained missionaries. But here again we are met with the statement quoted by "Economist":

"Our people will not have lay preaching!" Again and again we are told that better preaching is needed in the North-West than in Ontario or Quebec, and that it must be had at any cost, if our cause is to maintain its hold upon the people there.

I have thus hurriedly gone over some of the salient points in your correspondent's letter. Our system of Home Mission Administration in Manitoba and the North-West may not be perfect, but every year, guided by experience, we are trying to make it better, and if "Economist" would only ventilate his grievances on the floor of the Assembly, or append his name to his communications, he will, I humbly submit, much better serve the cause he has at heart. I am, yours faithfully,

WILLIAM COCHRANE.
Brantford, April 6, 1888.

Pastor and People.**GOSPEL WORK.****REMARKABLE CONVERSION.**

Twelve months ago I was invited to the north of England to conduct a Gospel mission in connection with the opening of a new chapel erected under rather extraordinary circumstances. The gentleman who built it had been for many years a deacon of a church and superintendent of a Sabbath school—so he told me (on the evening of my arrival at his house)—but though having a form of godliness he had never been born again, and consequently know nothing of the peace and rest of those who have passed from death unto life. Slowly but surely his true state before God dawned upon him, and he felt himself enveloped in terrible darkness and despair. Only one voice seemed to speak, and that bade him curse God and die. He felt that to do this in the town where he had taken such an active part in religious work would cause great scandal. So he made up his mind to get far away from every one who knew him. On a certain day he found himself at the railway station with his coat linings full of bank notes. His idea was to get to some seaport town, take ship for America, where he could die and be buried unknown. But the express for London had just steamed into the station; scarcely knowing what he was about, he took a ticket, and entered a carriage, in a few hours to find himself in the surging crowds of London streets.

For two months he wandered about hither and thither, feeling as if he were already one of the damned. Not a glimmer of hope came into his poor weary soul. He thought every day must be his last. At times he was tempted to spend his money in pro-

digality and sin before he committed suicide, but he felt the devil had enough in having his soul, so resisted this temptation. But brighter and better days were in store for him. It so happened one day, when hell itself seemed moved against him, that he stopped at a second-hand bookstall, and picked up a book with the following printed on the title-page:

THE JERUSALEM SINNER SAVED:**OR, GOOD NEWS FOR THE VILEST OF MEN.**

Being a help for despairing souls, showing that Jesus Christ would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners.

BY JOHN BUNYAN.

He began to read till tears blinded his eyes, and there and then was enabled to rest his weary soul on Christ's finished work. He was soon filled with joy unspeakable, returned home and told what great things God had done for him. He soon after presented an organ to the church as a kind of thanksgiving offering. But he felt this was not enough. He was intensely desirous of preaching the same kind of Gospel that Bunyan preached in "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved," which had been the means of his conversion.

So he bought a piece of ground in a very poor neighbourhood, and put up quite a handsome building, and invited me to conduct a ten-days' mission in connection with the opening. Quite a number of poor people were brought out of darkness into light; they formed themselves into a Church, and elected my friend who had put up the building as their lay pastor. There he may be found week by week preaching to the people "that Jesus Christ will have mercy even on the biggest sinners."

J. B. W.

BE STRONG, O HEART!

Be strong to bear, O heart of mine,
Faint not when sorrows come;
The summits of these hills of earth
Touch the blue skies of home.
So many burdened ones there are
Close toiling by thy side,
Assist, encourage, comfort them,
Thine own deep anguish hide.
What though thy trials may seem great?
Thy strength is known to God,
And pathways steep and rugged lead
To pastures green and broad.

Be strong to love, O heart of mine,
Live not for self alone;
But find, in blessing other lives,
Completeness for thine own.
Seek every hungering heart to feed,
Each saddened heart to cheer;
And when stern justice stands aloof
In mercy draw thou near.
True, loving words and helping hands
Have won more souls for heaven
Than all mere dogmas and mere creeds
By priests or sages given.

Be strong to hope, O heart of mine,
Look not on life's dark side;
For just beyond these gloomy hours
Rich radiant days abide.
Like hope, like summer's rainbow bright,
Scatter thy falling tears,
And let God's precious promises
Dispel thy anxious fears.
For every grief a joy will come,
For every toil a rest;
So hope, so love, so patient bear—
God doeth all things best.

A SAVOUR OF LIFE OR DEATH.

The Gospel preached produces different effects upon different men. Some grow indifferent under its operation; some harden their hearts under it; some sit under it for years and never respond to its spiritual influence, though interested in its intellectual or moral phases; some are convicted of sin as its minatory aspects are urged with earnestness, but make no effort to get over to Mercy's side when the Cross is held up to their view; some are touched by its love, and yield a happy-sort of easy-going consent to it, but never follow it up with a corresponding heart and life culture; some open to it a full soul and thorough assimilating susceptibility and so become its cordial, growing and living exemplifiers. But whatever the character and degree of its misuse or improvement, it finally issues either in our condemnation or our salvation. What a tremendous fact to ponder!—*Presbyterian Observer.*