

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTING SCHEME.—II.

MR. EDITOR,—In the former communication which I was permitted to address to your readers, most of the points connected with the new Supplementing Scheme prepared by the General Assembly's Committee, and designed to secure a more adequate support of the Ministry, were touched. It is scarcely necessary to justify the provision which it makes for increasing the salary in the case of congregations in Manitoba and the North-West to \$850, in those instances in which the rate of giving is such as would entitle the congregations in Ontario or the provinces to the east to receive a supplement making the salary \$750 and manse. The General Assembly has already recognized the justice of providing a large salary in these territories, in which the expenses of living are undeniably greater. It will be observed that a large minimum contribution to salary is also required of these congregations—one of \$450 and manse—to entitle them to participate in the benefits of the Fund.

It is obvious that a large annual income will be required to run this Scheme efficiently and with success. It would, however, be very desirable to know, before adopting the Scheme, what this income would need to be. Unfortunately, it cannot be approximately determined. I have made out a list of the congregations of the Church having settled pastors who were in the receipt of less than \$750 and manse, and have estimated what would have to be paid to each, at their present rate of giving, and according to the provisions of the proposed Scheme. The whole amounts to a little under \$21,000. This does not include, however, any appropriation for those congregations which are not at present meeting the specified conditions of admission to the list, but for some of which, under any Scheme, some provision must be made. Neither does it include any payments on account of weak congregations, vacant at the time for which the calculation is made. On the other hand, a considerable advance in the rate of giving for ministerial support may be confidently anticipated under the Scheme. This, while securing an increase in the salary of the minister, would in many instances reduce the demands on the Fund, and in not a few cancel them completely, for it would not be unreasonable to expect that a considerable number of congregations, giving at present \$650 and \$700 and a manse, would at once raise the salary of their ministers to \$750 and a manse, and so never come to receive anything from the Fund. Taking all considerations into account, one may safely conclude that it will require an income of at least \$21,000, and probably one of \$23,000 or \$24,000, to work the Scheme with efficiency and success. The amount expended for the same purpose last year in the two sections of the Church was nearly \$14,000. The larger sum, I feel satisfied, is quite within the ability of our Church, and may be raised without injury to other Funds, and with ultimate benefit to all of them, if the proper steps are taken, and the Church is led, as the result, to take even a very moderate view of what it owes to the ministers who are labouring in her weaker charges. It is quite evident, however, that it would be a hopeless task to raise the amount required, if the Supplementing Fund were to continue to form simply a part of the Home Mission Fund of the Church, as has hitherto been the case in the western section. Nor will the mere separation of the two Funds secure the desired result, unless there be at the same time an earnest and general effort to give the object that place before the Church's mind and conscience which it undoubtedly deserves.

What the Committee proposes is the institution of a separate Fund for supplementing stipends below \$750 and a manse, and this for the whole Church, without distinction of east and west. To this Fund congregations would be expected to make direct contributions proportionate to its importance, as to the other existing Funds of the Church. At first, and probably for some years, many, especially of the smaller congregations, might prefer to make but one contribution for the two objects: mission work in new and destitute districts, and supplements of stipends. In these cases it is recommended that the treasurer should divide the amounts contributed between the two objects in a proportion to be determined in view

of the estimate submitted to and approved by the General Assembly for the two departments of work. In addition, the object is one which should appeal with special force to the wealthier members of the Church, and from many of these direct contributions might be expected. In particular, should the Church indicate its preference for the Scheme, the Committee is of opinion that steps should be taken at an early day to raise such an amount, say \$10,000, as would enable it to be begun with a good working balance. There should be little difficulty in raising among the more able and liberal members of the Church this amount.

The Scheme, it will be seen, is designed to embrace the whole Church—most of our schemes are still sectional. Probably this cannot be easily avoided in the meantime, but it is matter for regret. It would be, in my opinion, a blessing of no small measure to have the whole Church united in the support and sharing in the benefits of the Supplementing Fund. And there is no insuperable, no even formidable barrier in the way. The circumstances, indeed, of the members of the Church, and the expenses of living, vary much in different localities. But, generally speaking, where the expenses of living are low, the rate of giving will also be low, and *vice versa*; and as the Scheme provides that the supplement should be graduated above \$600 and a manse by the rate of giving—any salary being supplemented beyond that amount only where the rate of giving exceeds \$8.50 per communicant—these inequalities would in most cases right themselves. Again, with the amount of supplement in each case so fully regulated by the provisions of the Scheme, a large Committee, entailing great expense if brought from distant parts, would be required to administer it. It is to be hoped, therefore, in the interest of our consolidation as one Church, even more than in that of this particular Scheme, that if it takes effect at all, it will take effect for all our settled pastorates from the remotest west to the sea.

It may perhaps assist Presbyteries in the discussion of the Scheme if I give some facts shewing what the effect of its application would be according to the returns reported in the last statistical tables presented to the Assembly.

I have already said that there were, according to these returns, 305 ministers in charge for the whole twelve months, who received from their congregations less than \$750 and a manse. I have not included in this estimate the amounts received from the Commutation Fund, as the General Assembly has ruled these out in such calculations. Eighty of the 305 are in the Maritime Provinces, 225 in the Western section. Manses or rented houses are provided in 236 cases. Attention was called in the former letter to the fact that no fewer than 114 of the 305 congregations giving salaries under \$750 and a manse, were contributing, according to last statistical report, either too small sums towards salary, or at so small rates per communicant that they could not be admitted to the list under the provisions of the Scheme. Much the larger number of these congregations, however, are paying, even at their present rate of giving, salaries of \$600, \$650, and \$700. Of those really needing aid, a number could, by a deputation of Presbytery or some other means, be readily brought up to the condition prescribed, and so become sharers in the benefits of the Fund. In the case of a few exceptionally situated, it would be both necessary and equitable to modify these conditions.

Of those qualified to be placed on the list, sixty-nine are contributing at a rate per communicant of from \$4.50 to \$5.50, and would therefore be entitled to be supplemented simply to \$600 and a manse. In point of fact, a considerable number of them are already paying a salary of this amount, and some of them even one larger. Not needing any aid to bring them up to the minimum, and not contributing at the rate which entitles to even the smallest share in the surplus, they could only receive benefit from the Fund by increasing their present rate of giving per communicant, as, were the Scheme in operation, many of them would no doubt do. And just here the advantage of the Scheme may be seen. One of this class of congregations (I take an actual case) has 134 communicants, pays a salary of \$650 and a manse, and thus contributes—making an allowance of \$50 for the manse—at a rate of \$5.22 per communicant. It gets no aid under the Scheme. But let it raise its payment for salary to \$700, or even \$690, and as then contributing at a rate of over \$5.50 per communicant, it would be entitled to a third of a share of the Surplus

Fund, and the whole salary would thus become \$750, or \$740, and a manse.

Further: of these congregations, forty-three are contributing at a rate of from \$5.50 to \$6.50 per communicant, and would thus be entitled to a third of a share in the Surplus Fund, or \$50; twenty-four are contributing at a rate of from \$6.50 to \$7.50, and would therefore be entitled to two-thirds of a share, or \$100; while no fewer than fifty-five (twelve in the Maritime Provinces, and forty-three in Ontario and Quebec) are contributing at and over \$7.50 per communicant, and would be entitled to a full share, or \$150. It says much for the liberality of our people in the support of ordinances, that there are among the weaker charges fifty-five whose members in full are giving at a rate of from \$7.50 and upwards, some of them reaching as high as \$12 and \$13 per communicant. These congregations are distributed over the whole Church. Five of them are found in the comparatively poor Presbytery of Quebec. The number of salaries in this class of congregations, which would be raised to \$750 and a manse under the Scheme, even at the present rate of giving, is sixty-seven. It would only be fair to expect this number to be considerably increased if the Scheme were put in operation, as its effect would be to stimulate to increased liberality. In the interest of an intelligent discussion of the proposed Scheme for the Supplement of Stipend, I have thought it right to present these facts. Some of them are more favourable, some less, to the Scheme. Some may possibly be used as arguments against its adoption. That is of little moment. What is needed is a full and intelligent discussion of the two Schemes now before the Church for securing a more adequate maintenance for the ministry. What one might well dread would be the adoption of either without the best mind of the Church in every part being brought to bear on its consideration. This, however, is not likely to take place. It is right to add, that whatever merits the Scheme the provisions and bearing of which I have sought to explain may have, these are not due to any one member of the Committee, valuable suggestions having been made by several members, some of whom were unable to attend in person, but sent their views in written form.

In bringing this letter to a close, I may be permitted to express the opinion that to whichever of the two Schemes the Presbyteries may give their approval, the attainment of the object contemplated alike in both—a more adequate support for the ministers of our Church—is likely to be a matter of very considerable difficulty. It cannot be secured under any Scheme without a large and general exercise of liberality, rooting in a deep and widespread sense of the importance of the object. In many quarters this feeling has not begun to be entertained, and it is not the easiest thing to awaken it. Many objects appeal more directly and more powerfully to popular sympathy than a movement to secure a moderate increase to the smaller salaries of the Church's ministers. With many it could not compare in urgency with the obligation to send the Gospel to the heathen, or to supply Christian ordinances to the settlers in Muskoka or the North-West. We are warranted, however, in cherishing the hope that there are not a few, both among the ministers and lay members of our Church, to whom the duty of raising the pastors of smaller congregations above harassing cares, and of furnishing them with the means of supporting and educating their families, is not less urgent than either of these Christian obligations. A fair argument, indeed, might be made out for giving it a priority to either. In reality they are not in conflict the one with the other, but mutually helpful. In particular, if, as the result of these discussions, the support of the ministry among us is, by the blessing of God, placed on a better footing, both the Home and Foreign Mission work of the Church will speedily feel the advantage.

Thanking you for the space which you have given me, and apologizing for the length of this communication,
JOHN M. KING.

Toronto, December 26th, 1881.

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN FRANCE.—III.

Your readers will have learned from my last letter some of the difficulties with which the Reformed Church of France has to contend, owing to so many of its ministers being unfaithful to the preaching of the Gospel, and who are, therefore, either misleading their flocks, or permitting them to stray in the wilder-