

with the station—the number of souls—the number of members in communion with the church—the amount collected for the Home Mission Fund during the year ending ———, and collections for other purposes—stating what they are.

Stations that have not been visited by the Missionaries and in which a large extent to be supplied with sermon, should forward to the Clerk of Presbytery a report as above, together with any other information that might be useful in giving an idea of the importance of the station.

To one who has not travelled through the Province, and whose mind has not been turned to the subject, it is difficult to convey an adequate idea of the spiritual destitution that prevails. It may truly be said, that “there remaineth yet much land to be possessed, how long are ye slack to go in to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?” Every individual Christian is imperatively called upon by the duty which he owes to his brethren according to the faith—by his duty to God, to give countenance and support to Missionary exertions—to give of his substance as God has enabled him, to send the Bread and the Water of Life to those who have need.

Our Home Missions have neither been overlooked nor neglected, but how little comparatively has yet been done, in the vast and rapidly extending field! and how far do we fall short of the zeal and liberality that characterized the early Christians!

JOHN BURNS.

Acton, Esquesing, }  
October, 1846. }

WIDOWS' FUND.

The constitution of the Widows' Fund, of the Free Church of Scotland, which was published in our last number, is based upon a report on the subject prepared by Mr. Low, Accountant in Edinburgh, one of the professional gentlemen with whom the Committee of the General Assembly consulted. The following extracts from the report will be found interesting. Mr. Low first of all applies himself to the questions, “Whether the objects of a Widows' Scheme are attainable by means of ordinary life assurance, and whether it would be desirable to attempt to make a fixed bargain with an assurance office;” and he answers both of these questions in the negative, on very sufficient grounds. This portion of his report, however need not be inserted *here*.

He then goes on to other questions more directly bearing on our case, viz. :—

“3. Whether the contributions should be made compulsory on all the members.”

“The experience of most Schemes of this kind has shown that to render them efficient, they must be compulsory: the generality of those which are not so having sooner or later shown weakness. This might have been expected; for it is natural for bachelors, after a certain time of life, to cease contributing to a Fund from which they have no prospect of reaping any advantage; and the same remark may be applied to widowers. The Fund is thus in danger of being weakened, and the averages relied on at its formation are liable to be disturbed, and so give rise to inequalities, by rendering it necessary to restrict the annuities originally contemplated. This, again, however necessary and expedient, is apt to shake confidence, and so tend to limit the operation of the whole Scheme.

“Indeed, from circumstances which have recently come to my knowledge, I would have considerable hesitation in recommending the formation of any Scheme in which the compulsory principle could not be enforced. This, as you know, can only in general be accomplished by the intervention of an Act of Parliament; and even then the Legislature have uniformly made the obligation prospective, leaving it optional, on the part of existing members of the body, to join or

not. The effect of this has been to retard the full development and uniformity of the Scheme.

“In the case of the Free Church, however, the compulsory principle can be fully given effect to at once by the authority of the General Assembly, in connection with the Sustentation Fund. This is a most important advantage, indeed without it, even an attempt to form a Scheme at all might have been a question for grave consideration. Admitters should, however, exert difficulty is objected and important benefits are proved besides. Thus the expense of collection may be said to be entirely done away with, as well as the risk of any loss from arrears of contribution. A material facility is likewise afforded in making the investments, from the coming in at a fixed time of the year. These are all important considerations, and I most say, afford no ordinary facilities, both in the formation and future administration of the Scheme.

“4. Whether the rates of contribution should be uniform at all ages, and without regard to the relative ages of husband and wife at marriage.”

“There can be no doubt that uniformity of rates does give rise to certain inequalities, and has produced effects in certain bodies when it has been indispensably necessary to counteract, by extra contributions, in respect of the age at entry, relative ages of husband and wife, and even other circumstances in Schemes of a purely voluntary character. The effects, however, here alluded to are not so likely to occur in a body such as the clergy. This conclusion might have been come to by inference; but it is also confirmed in the experience of the F.F. Fund; and as I certainly do regard simplicity to be a cardinal principle in all such institutions, I am in favour of uniformity generally, and especially so, as applicable to the body for whom the present Scheme is intended.

“Although, then, the marriage tax resolved upon by the Committee may be said to be somewhat at variance with this principle, yet it is so slightly so as not to render it objectionable; and, upon the whole, knowing the difference of opinion that prevails on this subject, it appears to me that the Committee have acted judiciously in the circumstances, and their resolution cannot lead to any practical inconvenience.

“The following are the data which have been fixed upon by the Committee:—

“1. That the contributions to the ‘Widows' Fund’ shall be compulsory, and at the rate of £5, payable at the 25th day of May annually.

“2. That the entry-money shall be £10, payable in two years: that is, every member shall pay double rates for the first two years.

“3. That there shall be a marriage tax of £5, payable at the 25th May after marriage, for all ages below forty-five; and for all ages above forty-five, such tax shall be £10, whereof £5 to be payable as above, and the remainder at the 25th May next following.

“4. That there shall be a separate contribution of £2 per annum, to form a distinct Fund, to be called ‘The Orphans' Fund,’ for the benefit of the bereaved children of contributors, each child receiving an annuity till eighteen years of age.

1.—THE WIDOWS' SCHEME.

“Taking the rates of contribution as laid down in the foregoing data of the Committee, and the status of the several members as given in the tables of statistics, I have, by calculation, referring to the Carlisle table of mortality, and assuming the improvement of money at 3½ per cent. brought out the following results, namely:—

(1.) Present value of the contributions of the unmarried members, including the marriage tax, - - - - -	£22,877,255
(2.) Present value of the contributions of the married members, - - - - -	11,731,045
(3.) To which falls to be added the sum already contributed, - - - - -	1,545,000
“Sum, - - - - -	£36,153,300

(1.) Present value of reversionary annuities of £1 per annum to the widows of the unmarried members, - - - - -	£696,190
(2.) Present value of like annuities to the widows of the married members, - - - - -	526,819
“Together, - - - - -	£1,223,009
“To which add for second and subsequent marriages, - - - - -	82,606
“In all, - - - - -	£1,305,615

“From the above results, then, it will be found that the average computed annuity which the Fund can now afford to hold out to each widow is about £27,691, say £27.

“In this calculation no provision is made for the expenses of management; but as the introduction of unmarried members hereafter would improve the condition of the Fund, I am, on that account, as well as considering that it has been assumed that every present member will marry, of opinion that an annuity of £27 may be safely held out; provided power is reserved under the constitution to increase or diminish such annuity, in case the result of the periodical valuations should show that an increase or diminution would be safe or necessary.

II.—THE ORPHANS' SCHEME.

“This is a separate and distinct feature in the general Scheme, and, contemplated to the extent indicated by the rate of contribution fixed on by the Committee, has required some degree of consideration. The records of the old Fund, and any other that I am acquainted with, are all very defective in regard to the births and deaths of the children. The returns which have been received, no doubt, supply this deficiency in some measure. Still it is necessary to make certain further suppositions, in order to arrive at a conclusion, and which I have endeavoured to do in the most favourable manner that the case admits of, with a view to the future stability of the Fund.”

[After here giving some statistical details, and stating the data that had been assumed in the calculations relating to this branch of the Fund, the Report proceeds thus:]

“From the foregoing results, therefore, it may be concluded, that as an equivalent to the £3 per annum required to be paid by each member to the ‘Orphans' Scheme,’ it would be safe to hold out to each child an annuity of £10, to commence on the father's death, to be increased to £15 on the death of the last surviving parent, and to cease on the child attaining the age of eighteen; provided that, in the constitution, a power, is reserved to increase or diminish the annuities whenever the result of the periodical investigations shall show this to be necessary.

“It will be observed, that I have referred in both Schemes to periodical investigations. On this subject I may observe, that it is now held as a settled point by actuaries, that it is quite unsafe to continue on institutions of this kind for any lengthened time, without stated and rigid examinations of the affairs, so as to test how far the actual experience has accorded with the assumed data. I am quite aware that such investigations have, in many cases, been objected to, on the ground of the great expense attending them. This, however, has in general, I think, been incurred, in consequence of the defects of the office records. With a perfect and matured system of records, regularly kept up, these periodical investigations may be reduced to much greater simplicity than is generally supposed. The importance of this subject, therefore, cannot be too strongly impressed upon the Committee.

“With respect to the payment of the contributions, it will be kept in view that the calculations proceed upon the supposition, that every minister who contributed £5 last year, will this year pay £10 to the Widows' Fund, and £2 to the