

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### HOME MISSIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—To be a member of our Home Mission Committee is one of the most unenviable positions in the Church. The present Home Mission debt, the illiberality of the people, the withdrawing of grants, etc., etc., are all laid on the Committee. And yet I cannot see one act they have performed that really deserves blame. They could not pay out money they did not receive. They could not continue to promise grants when past experience told them plainly there was no probability of fulfilling their promises. Surely the Committee acted wisely in the matter. I do not agree with your correspondent who thinks this action should have been taken before. To have taken this stand, at any other time since the union, would have been disastrous to the Church. We must work in new fields, or others will do just what was done in the earlier days of Ontario and Quebec, take our people from us.

Presbyterians settling in Manitoba and other parts of the Northwest, must be kept Presbyterians by the efforts of the Church, or they would soon be lost to us, and go to swell the ranks of Methodists and Episcopalians. Presbyterianism would be forgotten by them, and never once known by their children. Past experience teaches us a bitter lesson on this point. I am glad the Home Mission Committee did not forget that lesson. Then there are weak, struggling congregations, both in Ontario and Quebec, where churches would have been closed and our cause hopelessly ruined, had the grant been withdrawn at any previous period. I think it is a matter of thankfulness to the whole Church, and not at all a matter of regret, that the Committee did not curtail expenditure and with it the progress of our Church during the financial depression. What a "Minister," in a late issue of your paper has been pleased to term a "denominational crash" has come now, and come in good time. A wave of returning prosperity is sweeping all over our country. Our Church, under the judicious management of the Home Mission Committee, has grown in the dark hours of the past five years, and now with her borders greatly enlarged, with "her cords" lengthened and "her stakes" strengthened, by the continued blessing of God, there will be little, if any, difficulty in removing the debt. Our Committee have shewn themselves to be men of good judgment, and men who have the best interests of the Church at heart. I would relieve them of all blame, and rather give them praise for having so nobly and successfully, in the face of many difficulties, carried the Home Mission work through the darkness of a gloomy and most trying time, to the day dawn of a returning prosperity.

The blame of the present deficiency rests on our Presbyteries and not the Committee. If Presbyteries had done their duty half as well as the Committee have done their work, the present debt would never have accumulated, nor would there be nearly so many congregations reported as not contributing to the Home Mission Fund. One congregation of about 150 families, during the past five years, has only contributed \$10.00 to the Home Mission Fund; another reporting 141 families, has given nothing for the past two years; another with 130 families, sends a like amount. Go over Presbytery returns and we find many of the largest congregations, some of them city charges, do little or nothing for this branch of the Church's work, while the majority of vacancies and mission stations is reported as non-contributing. The fault must lie with Presbyteries that have the oversight of these congregations and mission fields. It is the duty of every Presbytery to have collections taken up for every one of the schemes of the Church in each of its congregations, settled and vacant, as well as in its mission fields. Unless Presbyteries in this way provide funds and strengthen the hands of Committees, the result must be miserable failure. It is not loyal to the principles of Presbyterianism to neglect to take up collections as ordered by the Assembly; nor is it fair to the Committee, after having so acted to cry out, "Our Committee have failed to meet their engagements." Every congregation and mission station should be required to report to its Presbytery at its regular meetings, whether the necessary collections were taken up, and the amount of each. Presbyteries can then deal with the defaulting ones. It is an easy

matter for Presbyteries to carry out this order of Assembly and not only give congregations an opportunity to contribute, but insist that contributions be made. As Dr. Cochrane says, "Nothing surely is easier than to note defaulting congregations, and deal with them, if necessary." If Presbyteries fail to do this, our Synod or Assembly should deal with them. I am afraid there is too much of a spirit of Congregationalism creeping into our congregations and prevailing amongst some of our ministers. Presbyteries are doing much to fondle this spirit, when, from any cause, they allow defaulting congregations and ministers to pass without strict inquiry into the reasons for not obeying the injunctions of Assembly.

Presbyterianism, to some, seems to be little more than a name to live by; the system itself, if not dead, is very weak and sickly. There is no grander system for carrying on Church work. The progress of Christianity all over the world, and the equal progress of Presbyterianism, proves this. In whatever country we find the religion of Jesus Christ, we are there almost sure to find some form of the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterianism has long since freed itself from the charge of being a mere "provincialism," and has spread itself over the world, till it has gained a foremost place amongst Christian organizations. This has been done by the beauty, the firmness and the strength of its system, as well as by the simplicity, the purity, and the power of the doctrines it teaches. To-day the Presbyterian Church stands head and shoulders over all other Churches in the grace of *Liberality*. It is a fact, I think none will contradict, that in those Presbyteries in the Canada branch of the Presbyterian Church, where the principles of Presbyterianism are most efficiently carried out, there, we find not only the most active congregations, but the most liberal, and, consequently, the most prosperous. Presbyteries are really the moving power of the Church. They bear the same relationship to congregations that the soul bears to the body. Without Presbyteries our Church would be dead, as the body without the soul is dead. Here is the seat of real life, of true vigour, of lasting prosperity. If our Church is to progress in the Home Mission field, our Presbyteries must be active. Much land yet remains to be possessed; many new fields are opening up, we must take possession of them, or other Churches will. I am fully convinced, that if Presbyteries will do their duty in raising funds, there will be no difficulty in wiping out the present debt and very much extending the present borders of our Church.

J. LEISHMAN.

December, 1879.

### DANCING.

While we have no direct data whereby to determine how, when, or where dancing had its beginning, yet very early records, both sacred and profane, shew, not only that it widely prevailed among rude as well as civilized nations at a far by-past period, but that the dance formed an all but indispensable element alike in their religious ceremonies and warlike celebrations. In short, all their dances were either of a sacred or soldierly character, and thus in both they danced before their altars, and around the statues of their gods. In addition to this the Greeks were wont to deify human passions, and institute and perform dances in keeping with the characters assigned to such deities. Among the more sedate Romans, however, it was reckoned disgraceful for a free citizen to dance except in connection with their religious services, hence the well-known declaration of Cicero that "no one dances unless he is either drunk or mad," and hence, also, in their festal entertainments, in early as in later times, the dancing was performed only by hired and professional dancers. All this is in full keeping with the surprise, as story tells, of the foreigner, who when he first saw, in our higher circles, so many voluntarily subjecting themselves to the frequent fatigues of the fashionable dance, wondered why they did not get their servants to do it for them. The Jews, too, in common with other nations, had from an early period their sacred dances, which were performed as expressive of their gratitude and gladness, in connection with some special manifestation of the divine favour, or in commemoration of past mercies. The Jewish dances, however, whether sacred or social, were ever performed by the sexes separately, and while in each both sexes seem to have taken part, yet they remained in distinct and separate companies, and there is no evidence in sacred history to shew that dances were

promiscuously engaged in by both sexes together, except, it may be, when in the worship of the golden calf, all classes intermingled in the foolish and frantic revelry.

From a careful consideration of all that scripture says in regard to dancing, it is evident that dancing was a religious act, performed exclusively on joyous occasions, usually out of doors, in the day time, and only by one of the sexes, seeing that there is no instance in which both sexes are united in the exercise; and further, that those who perverted dancing from a sacred use, to a mere merry-making amusement, were regarded as infamous, and to be classed with the "vain fellows" so void of shame, alluded to by Michal, or with those families of whom Job speaks, whose dancing only increased their impiety and involved destruction, or with the shameless daughter of Herodias whose dancing terminated in the rash vow of Herod and the cruel murder of John the Baptist.

In view of all, a Presbytery in the neighbouring Union published the following declaration, which may not be unworthy the attentive consideration of the churches and families of our own Dominion:

"The practice of dancing in either private or public assemblies, this Presbytery regards as eminently worldly and sinful. It has been condemned by the highest judicatory of our Church and by most, if not all, other bodies of Christians. It is engaged in but by few professors of religion comparatively, and by those not noted for high spirituality or devotedness of life. It is regarded by worldly people as an amusement peculiarly their own, and when participated in by church members, furnishes the former with occasions for triumph and boasting, and brings reproach upon the cause of Christ. It fosters the keeping of late and unseasonable hours at night, consumes much precious time in preparing for, engaging in, and recovering from the season of mirth with which it is connected. It wastes the physical energies through exhaustion or exposure, in some instances producing death. It diverts the mind from serious and sacred things, and places beauty, dress and display before sobriety, worth and wisdom. It sinks the moral beneath the physical, or makes animal pleasure a higher good than spiritual joy. It is inimical to revivals of religion and harmonizes not with a spirit of devotion. If the propriety of it were only questionable or doubtful, even then to engage in it is to stifle, and to sin against, conscience. But it is at variance with the principle which Paul propounded, and is opposed, we believe, to that blessed Book which teaches us 'that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.'" DELTA.

### THEOLOGICAL DEGREES.

MR. EDITOR,—Seeing that the above subject has engaged the attention of the last three General Assemblies, and has been, by the last, sent down to the Presbyteries for their consideration, it must by its promoters be considered of the greatest importance to the welfare of the Church. If so, I hope the next General Assembly will send it down to Sessions and congregations, for their consideration. Were that done, I feel convinced a speedy end would be made of the whole matter.

Your correspondent "B" has, to his own satisfaction, I have no doubt, established the necessity for, and indicated the best mode of distributing such honours.

Allow me to suggest another mode, which would, if adopted, materially assist in delivering the Church from the present embarrassed financial distress, and be a permanent benefit for all time to come. Let the General Assembly fix a definite price upon all honorary titles from Rev. upward to the highest, and one or two new ones of a higher order might with advantage be adopted. Let the scale of prices be in proportion to the honour of the title. And let these honours be issued only by some central authority appointed for that purpose, upon the receipt of the application accompanied by the cash; and let the proceeds derived therefrom be applied to the Home Mission schemes of the Church. And to encourage home manufacture, let a national policy be adopted by putting a heavy duty upon all honorary titles accepted from without our own country, or, better still, let such be absolutely prohibited. Without this precaution, the scheme would be abortive, as it is a well known fact that almost any one can procure the right to add D.D. after his name, from some of those insignificant seats of