

MORE ABOUT OUR MISSION WORK.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian: An article from Fergus in your Toronto contemporary for 29th, ult., lies bristling before us. Trenchant, timely, and withal typical of the name MacDonnell. A trifle hard on the H. M. C. Our H. M. C. are used to hard knocks and we believe that they take most cordially all the hold-ups that they get from the fields or from the pens of those who so critically inspect their doings.

We are sure the committee have a warm leaning to the struggling missionary. His interests are in both their eyes and their heart, and when he suffers they suffer with him.

But, the committee has no desire to spoil either the missionary or the people. Guaranteed salaries of any kind to settled men or missionaries is not a Free Church principle. If the missionary's salary must be guaranteed, why stop at that? Why not that of the man in augmented charge? Why not that of every minister? We recognize that the revenue from the missionary's field is more uncertain, though not always so. "We step upon dangerous ground when we press the guarantee of salary beyond the official sphere. But there is a point in the criticism of our Fergus correspondent. Must the dignity of our Free Church principles be maintained at the cost of actual suffering on the part of the missionary? Surely not. Long suffering will have its perfect fruit, but the church at large will suffer and is suffering to-day. A suffering which will have its bitter fruit. The bitter cry of poorly supported and unfairly treated missionaries will inevitably stifle in the soul of many a young man a yearning to enter the ministry.

It behoves the church to see that no such wall beats upon the ears of youth from the midst of vineyard laborers. But if this is not to be remedied by guaranteed salaries, how is it to be done?

Our Fergus correspondent strikes hard but he is not missing the nail head. What we think he is doing is: He is driving the nail in the wrong place. Truly indeed a groaning missionary unheard by the ear of the church is an ecclesiastical calamity. How may it be prevented and yet the H. M. C. maintain its present stand? That it is not wise to guarantee the salaries of missionaries generally, further than the grants made by it.

In answer we would say: It is scarcely the best policy of the committee to be annually extending the area of its financial energy to the limit of safety. The rapidly increasing opportunities may seem to demand it, but that is just where a critical analysis of policy becomes justifiable. We are anxious to seize opening opportunities, but if in so doing we are stifling the zeal of earnest consecrated men by leaving them inadequately supported or keeping them working under a cruel suspense, we are incurring a greater guilt than by leaving promising fields unsupplied.

We are inclined to think that a few thousands of the Home Mission funds of the church could be well applied in providing for the salaries of Presbyterian superintendents or pastors at large, whose special work it would be to visit the mission fields assigned to their charge. Visit every family, attend to the subscribing and payment of regular contributions to the support of Christian ordinances. To dispense sacraments and, associated with the missionary always, perfect so far as possible the organization of the field and as soon as possible bring it to a self-sustaining stand.

A standard number of fields could be arranged for each Presbyterian superintendent. If one Presbyterian had not the requisite number of fields assign two Presbyteries or more to one superintendent until the standard number of fields were brought under his supervision. As Presbyteries come to have no mission fields within their bounds, readjustments would require to be made and fewer special supervising pastors would be required.

This is a work that no general superintendent could possibly do. It is partially attempted by Presbyteries assigning to pastors in regular charge the supervision of a certain number of mission fields. But most of these men have work of their own so extended that only the most meagre attempt can be made to do anything further. The result is that the work of organization and primary development of these fields is left largely in the hands of inexperienced young men, many of whom (by no fault of theirs) are quite unfamiliar with Canadian conditions of church life and work. All honor to these young men who are willing to battle with the problems that lie at the foundation of things. But, are we giving them the help they need, and should get, at the hands of the more experienced?

Presbyteries are asked to consider the question of a field secretary for young people's societies. Another salary of general officer of the church. If the church has any extra money to spare from her schemes let it be spent more particularly and less generally. The Presbyterian church in Canada is too large for any field secretary to serve efficiently. We have need of Presbyterian superintendents who would have a field of work which it would be possible to compass. Young people's society organization could come in for a share of their effort. They could also seek the enlistment of young men for the ministry. They would be the direct agent in the field for securing the payment of the missionary's salary. If, however, under his effort the field fell short in its contributions an appeal from the supervising pastor in behalf of the missionary for a special grant would come before the committee in better form and with better grace and with more assurance to the committee that the grant was needed and that it was no fault of the missionary that the appeal was made.

As it is now H. M. Convenors of Presbyteries are making these special appeals with actually no knowledge as to whether they should be made or not, save that the missionary is pressing them for it. It looks as if the missionary was to blame. That is where the often unjust injury comes in.

The missionary would be freed from unjust imputation; the H. M. C. would be free to face with clearer information, and the funds of the church would in innumerable instances be saved from unnecessary appropriation, by the adoption of some such method as is humbly suggested herein.

J. M. McLaren.

Saltcoats, Sask., Oct. 11th, 1910.

HAMILTON.

Rev. Dr. Bryce, of Winnipeg, was a welcome visitor in Hamilton last week. Those who heard him in St. Paul's and Central churches will not soon forget his stirring sermons.

A successful rally service was held in Erskine Sunday school on Sunday, Oct. 2nd inst., the address for the day being given by Rev. J. A. Wilson, of St. Andrew's church.

Rev. A. C. Stewart, of Grafton, preached anniversary sermons in Chalmers' church on Sunday last, Oct. 9th.

Rev. A. E. Mitchell preached a special sermon to young men on Sunday evening.

The annual fight for reduction of licenses is once more on. This year a plebiscite is being asked, and some of the anti-reductionists in the council seem to be afraid even of this.

One of the latest publications of the American Tract Society is "Transfigured," by Rev. Joseph Hamilton, of Toronto, best known as an author by his books on "Our Own and Other Worlds," and the "Spirit World."

I dare say you have noticed that the only two things in the gospel that Jesus is ever said to have wondered at are faith and the want of faith.—James Denney.

THE DRIFT OF THE TIMES.

By Ulster Pat.

Time—What is it? The warp of life; Folly's blank and Wisdom's highest prize; the path of glory or the path of hell; a treasure which, if not grasped and used in its flight, is lost forever. Time is the present hour—the past is fled—to-morrow never yet on any mortal being rose or set. Such was the teaching of the National schools in the days of my boyhood, a period regarded by the generation of to-day with something akin to pity for the paucity of its advantages and opportunities—for its non-progressive-ness. But in the light of the Word of God, whence is the progress of which we boast? and whither is it tending? If "Sages who wrote, and warriors who bled" would tell us from the cold grave "Time sowed the seed we reap in this abode," of what sort ought our sowing to be? If "the golden sun and silver spheres, those bright chronometers of days and years," tell us that "Time is but a meteor glare," and bid us "for eternity prepare," is not the drift of our times retrogression instead of progress? Fifty years ago the day school taught the value of time in the light of eternity—not merely or mainly in regard to this world. The pupil was taught that the way to a hale old age was by a well spent youth. Bible teaching was not confined to a few verses read each day by the master. The text books were permeated with the Book in the form of both fact and illustration. Any one who had mastered the five "books of lessons" could not be accused of such ignorance of the sacred narrative as is I fear to be found among graduates of our colleges to-day.

But inasmuch as mere assertion is not evidence, I will, with the Editor's permission, bring into court one witness, of many that might be called. In a local newspaper published in a town which is known to many for its "progressiveness" religiously, morally, and materially, I read last month this "note," manifestly written by someone connected with the Young Men's Christian Association—an organization, by the way, of which the townspeople are especially proud. "With the last of the warm summer weather close at hand, and the termination of its sports and enjoyments, we begin to look around to see how we can now PUT IN OUR TIME TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE. We are pleased to say that the Y. M. C. A. gymnasium will be doing business at its regular stand. Classes for all will be conducted for the boy of twelve up to the man of fifty, commencing the first Monday in October. It is our intention to have a regulation gymnasium suit this winter. The uniformity will add greatly to the work of the class. These suits can be procured from Mr. Blank at a reasonable price. Call and inspect a sample suit. Drop in and talk it over," and so on. Boys from twelve years old" are tempted to leave their homes of an evening—or every evening—by games, athletics, superficial, or "attractive," reading matter, and especially "matches" with prizes as an inducement to greater diligence and the devotion of a larger portion of time to practice. And it cannot be pleaded that these "attractions" are provided for the homeless poor, or for those whose home environment is undesirable. Such are not likely to be "attracted" by an elegantly furnished building, frequented by well dressed lads and men, whose tastes, aspirations, and conversation are utterly foreign to them. And even if such should wish to come and "put in their time to the best advantage," they would be met by a membership fee, plus the "reasonable price" of a uniform, and other incidentals to them utterly prohibitive. This is a professedly Christian Association, so the boys are invited to devote an hour each week to Bible class. But even that short time is not, as I read, to be devoted to the study of the things of God, but to "The Travels of Paul!"