

nearly 500 persons, the congregation of Fergus have erected a house for their Minister, also of stone,—handsome and capacious, and worthy of being regarded quite as a model of a manse. Both buildings will probably cost £700 or upwards, but the subscriptions, including £50 from the Hon. Adam Fergusson, and a few smaller contributions from generous individuals, not of the congregation, amount to about £650. So that it is anticipated that the debt will soon be removed. It is highly creditable to a congregation like this in the backwoods composed of new settlers, to make such an effort in one year, in addition to contributing £120 to the Sustentation Fund, and upwards of £30 for other religious purposes. May the Great Head of the Church grant them his blessing which enricheth, and much fruit which may tend to his glory and praise.

THE SUSTENTATION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

The following statement drawn up by John Barus, Esq., who has visited a number of our congregations at the desire of the Sustentation Board, has just been handed to us for publication, by the Clerk of the Presbytery of Toronto. It is an interesting and valuable document, and we earnestly commend it to the attention of all concerned for the well-being of the Presbyterian Church of Canada:—

To the Presbytery of Toronto.

REVEREND SIRS:—Whilst lately employed by the Synod's Sustentation Board in visiting the congregations between Toronto and the Ot. wa, I made some observations respecting the state of the financial affairs of the Church, which I beg leave respectfully to submit to the Presbytery, with a view, (should they be thought of sufficient importance,) to their being laid before the Synod.

In the various congregations visited, I found no fixed rule of management. The nearest approach to uniformity existed in those congregations, in which the temporal management was vested in Deacons. Even in these the change from the old system was so recent that the new machinery had only begun to come into operation. In reference to the sustentation of the Ministry, the rule has, I believe, no exceptions—that wherever the best congregational management prevails, the Ministry is best supported.

Apart from its Catholic and Christian character, the Synod's Sustentation Scheme commends itself to the friends of the Church as a system of management, better calculated, if faithfully carried out, to call forth the Christian liberality of the people, than any other that has yet been devised. So much is this felt to be the case, that there are few, if any, who have objections that they are willing to advance to the principles upon which the Scheme is based. The only plausible reason that I have heard assigned for not coming immediately upon the Fund, is the circumstances of congregations—such as being in debt for Church-building or otherwise. Such apologies may be considered as arguments in favour of the Scheme. If there are any congregations deterred from coming upon the Fund by the fear of being called upon to aid weaker congregations, I found none to admit that as the cause. There is reason to believe that the Synod's Scheme will, ere long, be generally adopted.

In drawing up this paper, my intention is not to appear as the advocate of the Sustentation Fund. It is in able hands. My object is to call attention to the support of the Ministry, in general, and of the Home Mission particularly.

Perhaps one circumstance that has tended to the inadequate support of the Ministry is, that the subject has not been brought before the people with the solemnity and urgency due to so important a Christian duty. In settled congregations

it has been customary for church members to pay for seats in the Church, in proportion to the number of sittings their families occupied. In too many cases the subject of the support of the Gospel Ministry has been as summarily dismissed from the mind, as the most ordinary business transaction,—a certain amount paid for a certain portion of Church accommodation. Such a system is manifestly exceptionable in its operation, inasmuch as it draws from the abundance of the poor, and from the scanty substance of the poor, by the same rule, not Scripturally—as the Lord has promised them, "but according to the number of things each may occupy in the house of God." Nor is the mode of raising contributions by subscription free from objection. Subscriptions are, in more governed by the example of others, than by their own sense of duty. Hence subscriptions usually become more and more attenuated, as they proceed, each supposing, that, if those who have preceded him have done all that was required of them, he may rest for a less amount.

It is quite common also for the head of a house to be the only contributor to the support of the Gospel, in the family, the distant members considering that they are thereby exonerated from the duty.

In order that the important subject of making suitable provision for the maintenance of the Ministry, may be brought home to the conscience of every member and adherent of our Church, I beg leave with deference, to suggest, as I have already done to several congregations, the following plan, viz:—Let the Deacons' Court, or in the absence of such Court, the Managers or Trustees, make out a list of all the members and adherents of the congregation, to each of whom let a card be given, headed by a suitable text of Scripture, such as 1st. XXV. 29.—Prov. ix. 9.—2 Cor. viii. 3, 12, and iv. 6, 7, with a request that the individual receiving it will, within a given time, (say ten days,) after due and prayerful consideration, mark down his or her intended offering for the year, and having subscribed the same, return it to the proper office, or to the congregation. Few who make conscience of the duty—who spread out the black and before the Lord, and seek for the willing hand to give cheerfully, will fail to give liberally, according to their circumstances. After the appeal has been made, the way will be given for reflection and mature consideration,—people will not be taken by surprise, nor hurried into excessive liberality. "Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord: gold and silver and brass." Deacons or managers will, if he enabled to see to ascertain the amount likely to be collected in the congregation during the year.

The head of a family should consider it part of the education of the children committed to his care, to be taught to give of their substance to the support of religion. If they have no means of their own, let part of his contribution be given in their names. They will thus be early made to feel that the maintenance of the Gospel is a Christian duty, from which none is exempted, and that it is no tax or imposition but a free-will offering.

It were more in keeping with the character of such offerings, that they should be brought into the treasury of the Church. In present circumstances it may be found necessary to call upon contributors. To facilitate collecting and make it the less burdensome, there is, perhaps, no better plan than that which has been proposed for the Sustentation Fund, viz: to divide congregations into small sections, of from five to ten families, appoint for each section a collector, whose duty it shall be to call steadily for the monthly, quarterly or half-yearly contribution. The call should be made at short intervals—say quarterly.

Improvement and laxness the system of collecting has been in the settled congregations—it has been much more so in the Missionary stations. Seat-rents have not been introduced, both because there has been no regular supply of sermon, and because, in most cases, there has been no public place of worship. Subscriptions have been taken up in some places, in a way highly creditable. But in general no other opportunity has been offered

to the people for contributing to the support of the Home Miss. Fund, than an occasional notice on the Sabbath. The consequence has been that some stations have in the most laudable manner delayed all the expenses of the supply until the Presbytery, others have fallen short, and from some little or nothing has been received.

For removing the evil referred to, I beg to suggest the following plan, viz: At every Missionary station let the congregation be organized, and a suitable number of collectors appointed by the office-bearers, for receiving the termly free-will offerings of the people. As has been already proposed in reference to settled congregations, cards might be issued at the beginning of the year, to ascertain the probable amount likely to be contributed by each congregation. Where the population is thinly scattered, collectors' districts should be confined to a few families.

The following table will exhibit at a glance the probable working of the system. Take for example the Presbytery of Toronto, within the bounds of which, there are nearly sixty Missionary stations—suppose fifty. Of these some are ripe for settlement, and able to come up to the minimum stipend, proposed by the Sustentation Board:—

Families.	No. of Contributors.	Quarterly Contributions.	Annual Contributions.	Amount.	Stations.	Total.
		s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.
35	107	2 6 10	0 53 10	0 10	10	535 0 0
30	90	2 0 6	0 36 0	0 10	10	360 0 0
25	75	1 10 7	6 28	2 6 10	10	251 5 0
20	60	1 3 5	0 15 0	0 10	10	150 0 0
12	36	1 0 4	0 7 4	0 10	10	72 0 0
					50	1398 5 0

It is here assumed, that, at fifty Missionary stations there are 1220 families, containing 3689 contributors, being an average of nearly 25 families and 73 contributors each—the average quarterly contribution from each individual being about 1s. 8½d or 6s 10d. annually.

This calculation is, perhaps, not extravagant; but, admitting that the average contributions are overrated, may we not safely suppose that under complete organization and efficient management, the sum of £1,000 per annum might be realized from the supposed number of families and stations? The Presbytery of Toronto would then have the means of keeping in the field, for the supply of their vacancies, ten Missionary labourers, or one Missionary for every five stations.

At present a considerable portion of the Home Mission Fund comes from congregational collections, donations, and other sources than the Missionary Field. It is reasonable to suppose that assistance in that way would rather be increased than otherwise, were it known, that the people themselves were making spirited exertions to maintain the preaching of the Gospel amongst them. None have so good a claim upon the liberality of others as those who themselves run at liberal things.

Such calculations may at first sight appear visionary, but they will cease to be so, if the matter be taken up with a proper spirit. It is only by making a vigorous effort in this holy cause that success can be hoped for. Look at the gigantic schemes of other churches, and the prodigious results that have been produced, and the prospective enlargement of the Home Mission Scheme of the Synod of Canada, even to a greater extent than has been here supposed, will not be chimerical.

If the requisite statistical information were attained, calculations might be made with a considerable degree of accuracy. And such information might be easily procured by Presbyteries calling for reports from the various stations, to be furnished through the Missionaries at such time as to enable them to report to the Synod. Under the following heads the desired information might be ranged, viz: The number of families connected