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TORONTO, FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 1879.

AGED AND INFIRM MINISTERS' FUND.

BY the appointment of the General Assembly the annual collection on behalf of this fund falls to be made on Sabbath week, the 17th inst. Heretofore it has been customary to have this collection conjoined with that on behalf of the Widows' and Orphans' Fund, the amount being divided between the two schemes. Owing, however, to the increased number of annuitants and to the fact that the small capital has had to be drawn upon of late, the Assembly, in June last, resolved that the full amount of the collection this year should be devoted to the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund.

Though not of equal importance with the great missionary schemes of the Church, this Fund is one that presents strong claims upon the sympathies of our people and deserves hearty and liberal support. Small as are the salaries of many of our ministers at present, they were much smaller in the earlier history of the country, so that it was with great difficulty the pioneer ministers of our Church could support themselves and their families in comfort, not to speak of saving a little for old age. Many of these labourers after bearing the burden and heat of the day have been laid aside by infirmity from active work, and it is manifestly the duty of the Church to provide for them a comfortable maintenance in old age. We know that many will regard it not merely a Christian duty but a privilege to aid in supporting in the decline of life those who faithfully served the Church in laying solid the foundations of Presbyterianism throughout the Dominion.

Hitherto the amount received has been very small, not yielding in any case, we believe, over \$250 per annum. The committee in charge of the fund aim at being able to give every retired minister an annuity of \$400—by no means an extravagant sum—and there ought to be no difficulty in accomplishing this. We trust that the ministers of the Church will so present the claims of this fund to their congregations that the committee may be in a position *this year* to increase all the annuities to at least \$400. This is a scheme in support of which special bequests and donations from the wealthier members of the Church are most appropriate, and we hope that from these sources the capital of the fund will from time to time be largely augmented.

DEFAULTING CONGREGATIONS.

EVERY year many of our congregations fail to contribute to some of the Schemes of the Church. To each of the Schemes last year there were fully one hundred defaulting congregations, causing serious loss to the revenues of the Church and, as we believe, serious injury to the non-contributing congregations. As we pointed out in a recent issue, the fault lies largely with the ministers and sessions of these congregations. From indifference or other inexcusable cause they fail to carry out the instructions of the Assembly by not giving their people the opportunity of contributing to every one of the great Mission Schemes of the Church. To say that the people are too poor to contribute is never a valid excuse in our Church. The poverty of a congregation may be a good reason for their contributions being small, but it is no excuse for their not contributing at all, far less is it an excuse for ministers and sessions declining to give them the opportunity to contribute as God has prospered them. The apostle Paul testifies of the churches of Macedonia "how that the abundance of their joy and their DEEP POVERTY abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For," he says, "to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift." When a minister or session decline to give the people an opportunity to contribute to all the Schemes, or when they neglect to show them the duty and privilege of *liberally* supporting these schemes, on the plea that money contributed towards these is just so much taken from the minister's salary or from the current expenses of the church, they not only fail in loyalty to the Assembly and do grievous injury to their people, but they adopt the worst possible policy to accomplish their own selfish ends. The congregation that gives most largely for missionary operations almost invariably gives most liberally for its own minister's support.

We believe that the time has come not only for plain speaking but also for faithful dealing with the ministers and sessions of non-contributing congregations. At the recent meeting, in Edinburgh, of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, days were appointed for taking up collections for the several schemes, of which there were ten, from June 15, 1879, to April 18, 1880, and the following resolution adopted:

"The General Assembly enjoin the several Presbyteries to require of all the ministers within their bounds a distinct report whether the aforesaid collections have been made by them, and on separate days, and to record the said report in their Presbytery Books; and to wise ordain the several Synods to take a similar account annually of the diligence of their respective Presbyteries in this matter and to enter the same in their Synod Records, and the Committees appointed to revise the said Synod Books to take special notice whether the said Synod have obeyed this instruction. Further, the General Assembly instruct the several Committees for which collections have been appointed to bring up to next General Assembly a list of the several parishes from which no collections or parochial contributions have been received, in order that next General Assembly may, if it see fit, adopt such means as to its wisdom may appear suitable for dealing with any ministers who may disobey the General Assembly by refusing to give their people an opportunity of complying with the injunctions of the Supreme Court of the Church."

Similar action might be taken by the Assembly of our own Church with most beneficial results. It is not necessary, however, to

wait till the Assembly meets. Presbyteries can do much to remedy the evil of which we speak.

Had each Presbytery (what some of them have) a statistical committee, whose duty it would be to collect and compile annually from the Assembly Committee's report on Statistics, and other sources, a report showing, among other things, the names of the congregations within the bounds, that have not contributed to all the schemes, and were Presbyteries faithfully to deal with the office-bearers of such congregations, we are convinced that the interests of true religion would be served thereby, and the revenues of the Church's Schemes considerably increased. Not only might Presbyteries in this way accomplish much, but the members of our churches have a duty in connection with this matter. We refer not simply to the duty of giving for the support of the Church's Schemes, but more particularly to the duty each member owes to the congregation to which he belongs. It is not good for any congregation to be selfishly wrapped up in themselves so as to manifest no interest in what the Church is doing at home or abroad. Their own spiritual life will grow weak if they have no interest in fostering spiritual life in others. It is, therefore, the duty of every member to encourage his minister to put forth systematic efforts to enlist the sympathy and liberality of the whole congregation on behalf of all the Schemes of the Church.

OUR SISTER CITY.

HAMILTON suffered immense loss by fire on Friday last. During the afternoon of that day fire was discovered in one of the large mercantile houses, which quickly communicated its flames to neighbouring properties. As it was, about a million of property was speedily consumed. But it might have been otherwise. With an inadequate supply of water, the heroic exertions of the men might have proved of no avail. The wind in this neighbourhood was high at the time, and might well have spread the dangerous sparks all over Hamilton, and created many separate conflagrations that would have divided the force of firemen and proved too great a strain upon the existing supply of water. Such was the danger that despatches were sent to this city calling for engines and additional men, and had not word come at an early hour to the effect that the fire was subdued, these would have been sent forward to aid the firemen of Hamilton in their conflict with the devouring element. It is pleasing to know that a calamity which might have laid our fair sister city in ruins, fearful as it proved itself to be was thus restrained in its destructive course.

It is evident that there is peculiar danger arising from fire at this time of the year. These huge conflagrations generally occur during the heated terms. Chicago was laid waste in the month of October when every green thing was dry as tinder. The St. John fire took place in June, when the rays of the sun were pouring fiercely down. During such a year as the present there is peculiar danger arising