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Our Supplementing Scheme.

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The question of Ministerial support is gradually drawing a more adequate measure of attention. The Union of Presbyterianism, our Foreign Missions, and Collegiate Education have for some years past engrossed the chief attention of our Church courts. But during the past year there has been a manifest disposition on the part of presbyteries, synods, and assembly, to consider the best method of aiding our weak congregations, and doing justice to the brethren laboring therein. This interest is in part the result of the fundamental character of the question itself, for no church can prosper which does not care for its weak ones; and partly the result of special circumstances in the various sections of the church. In the Western section where the aiding of weak charges is a department of the Home Mission Board's work, the opening up of the North West, with its heavy demand for purely missionary work, is compelling the church to review the question of supplements and consider in what way this most important work can be accomplished. The same necessity for review in the Eastern section has become evident from the present condition of our Supplementing Fund.

The Supplementing Fund of our Church, has been drifting deeper and deeper into debt, for years. In 1876 there was a balance to credit of \$910, next year the balance disappeared and a debt of \$73 was incurred. Debt in 1878 was \$366;

in 1879, \$1084; in 1880, \$1017; and in 1881 it has reached \$2121.

Two or three facts are to be noted in connection with this statement: (a) Five years ago forty congregations actually received aid, last year only thirty-six. (b) Five years ago the amount actually expended was \$5209, last year \$3957. (c) During these years special efforts have been made to reduce expenditure and increase revenue. The former effort has been much more successful than the latter; for while expenditure has been reduced 20 per cent, revenue from congregational contributions has remained almost stationary, and the pressure of economy may prove fatal to the scheme. It will be observed indeed that the union of 1875 placed additional burdens on this fund, but it is also to be borne in mind that the United Church had a wider constituency and received larger grants from Scotland.

To what causes then are we to attribute the financial straits in which this scheme is now involved? It cannot be any doubt as to the value of the work designated, for with limited funds the Supplementing Committee has done an immense amount of good work, nor can there be any question but that the committee has endeavored to practise the most rigid economy. What then?

(1) The funds coming from the Home Churches have been gradually decreasing, and have reached the vanishing point. This fact, however embarrassing at present, will no doubt ultimately work for our advantage. Further dependence on external help would be a weakness and not a source of strength to the Eastern